

# **Council reports of dog attacks in NSW July 2004 – June 2005**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1996 the Department of Local Government established a database to record council reports of dog attacks. The Director General requested that dog attacks reported to councils be forwarded to the Department for entry into this database.

This data from councils assists with compiling profiles on the nature of dog attacks in NSW. Accurate identification of the circumstances of dog attacks also assists the Department in the development of appropriate policy and legislative responses.

In 2004, the Department updated the dog attack collection form in order to collect more accurate information from councils. This new form was implemented in 2004-05 to align data collection with the financial year.

**After the release of some preliminary data on breeds involved in dog attacks, councils reported additional information relating to dog attacks for the 2004-05 reporting period. Please note that the information presented in the following tables supercedes any previously released data.**

**Note: Care should be taken when interpreting any of the following figures received from councils relating to reported dog attacks. In some instances poor council reporting practices such as reporting the attack prior to completion of investigation have provided little or no data, and in other instances a person has reported an attack but investigating council officers were unable to locate the dog/s involved or in some cases the victim.**

## 2. BASELINE DATA NSW COMPANION ANIMALS REGISTER

The following table provides generic information on dogs listed on the NSW Companion Animals Register (The Register) as at 30 June 2005.

| <b>Baseline Statistics</b>                     | <b>Number</b> | <b>%</b> |
|--|---------------|----------|
| Dogs listed on the Register as at 30 June 2005 | 963,362       |          |
| Dogs listed on the Register as Identified only | 346,673       | 35.9%    |
| Dogs listed as Chipped and Lifetime Registered | 616,689       | 64.1%    |

### 2.1 Age of Dogs

| <b>Age of animal</b>               | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Number of animals                  | 963,362       |                   |
| Dogs aged less that six months old | 21,633        | 2.2%              |
| Dogs aged six months – one year    | 44,023        | 4.6%              |
| Dogs aged one year – two years     | 96,748        | 10.0%             |
| Dogs aged two years – five years   | 500,113       | 51.9%             |
| Dogs aged five years – ten years   | 224,562       | 23.3%             |
| Dogs aged over 10 years            | 76,283        | 7.9%              |

**Note:** These figures do not include animals previously listed on the Register but now listed as 'deceased'.

## 2.2 Breeds of Dogs

| Purebreed                        | Number         | %     | Crossbreed                | Number         | %     |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------------------------|----------------|-------|
| <b>Number listed on Register</b> | 671,897        | 69.7% |                           | 291,264        | 30.3% |
| <b>Undesexed**</b>               | 138,577        | 20.6% | <b>Undesexed**</b>        | 156,745        | 53.8% |
| <b>Desexed**</b>                 | 299,873        | 44.6% | <b>Desexed**</b>          | 40,011         | 13.7% |
| <b>Unknown if desexed</b>        | 233,447        | 35.0% | <b>Unknown if desexed</b> | 94,709         | 32.5% |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>671,897</b> |       | <b>Total</b>              | <b>291,465</b> |       |

\*\* The figures relating to the desexed/non-desexed status of dogs on the Register only relates to lifetime-registered dogs. Desexed status is not recorded on animals listed as identified only. This could mean that there are dogs on the Register that have paid a non-desexed registration fee but may in fact be desexed at a later date.

The following table provides details for the top twenty most popular purebreed and crossbreed dogs listed on the Register.

| Purebreed  | Number | Crossbreed**   | Number |
|--|--------|--|--------|
| 1.Labrador   | 43,325 | Maltese  | 49,366 |
| 2.Maltese  | 42,829 | Border Collie  | 21,835 |
| 3.Staffordshire Bull Terrier   | 40,776 | Labrador   | 16,917 |
| 4.Jack Russell Terrier   | 40,178 | Australian Cattle Dog* (includes Heeler and Smithfield cattle dog) | 15,344 |
| 5.German Shepherd Dog  | 35,711 | Staffordshire Bull Terrier   | 13,201 |
| 6.Border Collie  | 32,647 | Jack Russell Terrier   | 12,721 |
| 7.Australian Cattle dog* (includes Heeler and Smithfield cattle dog) | 28,850 | Australian Kelpie  | 12,460 |
| 8.Rottweiler   | 23,735 | Fox Terrier  | 11,110 |
| 9.Fox Terrier (smooth)   | 23,092 | German Shepherd Dog  | 11,078 |
| 10.Golden Retriever  | 20,397 | Rottweiler   | 7,521  |
| 11.Australian Kelpie   | 16,532 | Australian Silky Terrier   | 6,002  |
| 12.Tenterfield Terrier   | 16,488 | Australian Terrier   | 5,181  |
| 13.Cavelier King Charles Spaniel                                     | 15,072 | Mastiff  | 4,229  |
| 14.Boxer   | 14,561 | Shih Tzu   | 4,161  |
| 15.Shih Tzu  | 13,026 | Chihuahua  | 4,127  |
| 16.Australian Silky Terrier  | 11,816 | Rhodesian Ridgeback  | 2,337  |
| 17.Cocker Spaniel  | 11,786 | Bull Terrier   | 2,178  |
| 18.Chihuahua   | 10,290 | Tenterfield Terrier  | 2,091  |
| 19.Beagle  | 9,483  | Pomeranian   | 1,428  |
| 20.Pomeranian  | 7,969  | Boxer  | 1,385  |

\* These 'breeds' also include dogs that are similar or the same but identified as different breeds i.e.; Cattle Dog (Heeler, Smithfield), Pitbull Terrier (American Pitbull Terrier), Mastiff (Bull Mastiff).

\*\* To determine the 'breed' of those described as crossbreed dogs, the first breed listed in the Register in the animal's record determined the category in which it was placed.

### 3. PREVIOUS REPORTING OF DOG ATTACKS

Prior to the most recent reporting period, the reporting of attacks to the Department was inconsistent for the years 1996 - 2003. This was due to a number of factors including:

- data collection forms varied annually resulting in different information being collected
- the collection period changed from calendar year to financial year
- the number of reported attacks varied from 213 to 450 and
- the number of councils reporting attacks varied from 18 to 54.

Given the above circumstances, it is not practicable to make comparisons or draw conclusions between previous data collections and the 2004-2005 data. However, the following table represents basic data collected by the Department from January 1996 to December 2003.

#### 3.1 Previous Data Collected from NSW Local Councils

|   | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Reported attacks</b>                           | 449  | 521  | 239  | 313  | 213  | 294  | 291  | 167  |
| <b>No councils reporting</b>                      | 48   | 54   | 49   | 31   | 18   | 23   | 21   | 13   |
| <b>Attacks in public</b>                          | 313  | 303  | 144  | 198  | 153  | 196  | 204  | 114  |
| <b>Attacks on private property</b>                | 136  | 177  | 71   | 97   | 60   | 98   | 86   | 41   |
| <b>Attacks where location is unknown</b>          | N/A  | N/A  | 24   | N/A  | 0    | 0    | 1    | 12   |
| <b>Attacks on people</b>                          | 214  | 217  | 138  | 186  | 134  | 174  | 117  | 93   |
| <b>Attacks on animals</b>                         | 235  | 204  | 69   | 54   | 59   | 120  | 42   | 57   |
| <b>Attacks on people &amp; animals</b>            | N/A  | N/A  | 7    | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  | 8    |
| <b>Attacks where what was attacked is unknown</b> | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  | 9    |

**Note:** Where N/A appears in the table, the data was either not available or not collected for that period.

### 4. COUNCIL REPORTED ATTACKS AND INJURIES 2004-05

In the 2004-2005 reporting period a total of 74 councils reported 873 dog attacks. This represents 49% of councils in NSW submitting reports. However, there is evidence to suggest that of those councils who did report attacks, not all attacks were reported.

The councils that did report dog attacks can be categorised as 'urban' or 'rural' using the "Australian Classification of Local Government" as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In this classification, the following definitions apply:

- A Rural Council is one with "population < 20,000 and population density < 30 persons per sq km and < 90% of population is urban".
- An Urban Council is one with "population >= 20,000 or population density >= 30 persons per sq km or >= 90% of population is urban".

Urban councils reported a total of 829 attacks with rural councils reporting 44 attacks.

#### 4.1 Breeds identified as involved in attacks

There were 29 purebreed breeds of dog identified as being involved in an attack. It should be noted that as more than one dog was involved in a number of the reported attacks, the figures relating to these breeds will not total the reported attacks tally of 873.

##### Purebreeds

| Breed   | Number of attacks breed was involved in | Number of breed on the Register | % of breed reported as having attacked*** |
|---|---|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. German Shepherd Dog                          | 63                                      | 35,711                          | 0.2%                                      |
| 2. Australian Cattle Dog*                       | 59                                      | 28,850                          | 0.1%                                      |
| 3. Rottweiler                                   | 58                                      | 23,735                          | 0.2%                                      |
| 4. Bull Terrier (Staffordshire)                 | 41                                      | 40,776                          | 0.1%                                      |
| 5. American Pitbull Terrier and Pitbull Terrier | 33                                      | 3,244                           | 1.0%                                      |
| 6. Bull Mastiff and Mastiff                     | 24                                      | 5,602                           | 0.4%                                      |
| 7. Bull Terrier                                 | 23                                      | 4145                            | 0.6%                                      |
| 8. Australian Kelpie                            | 16                                      | 16,532                          | 0.09%                                     |
| 9. Labrador                                     | 15                                      | 43,325                          | 0.03%                                     |
| 10. Border Collie                               | 15                                      | 32,647                          | 0.04%                                     |
| 11. Maltese                                     | 15                                      | 42,829                          | 0.03%                                     |
| 12. Siberian Husky                              | 14                                      | 6,683                           | 0.2%                                      |
| 13. American Staffordshire Bull Terrier         | 13                                      | 5,137                           | 0.3%                                      |
| 14. Terrier (unknown what type of Terrier)**    | 13                                      | 8,983                           | 0.1%                                      |
| 15. Jack Russell Terrier                        | 11                                      | 40,178                          | 0.03%                                     |
| 16. Boxer                                       | 8                                       | 14,561                          | 0.05%                                     |
| 17. Alaskan Malamute                            | 7                                       | 5,814                           | 0.1%                                      |
| 18. Rhodesian Ridgeback                         | 6                                       | 5,511                           | 0.1%                                      |
| 19. Doberman                                    | 5                                       | 5,311                           | 0.09%                                     |
| 20. Chihuahua                                   | 6                                       | 10,290                          | 0.06%                                     |
| 21. Greyhound                                   | 4                                       | 519                             | 0.8%                                      |
| 22. Dalmatian                                   | 3                                       | 6,030                           | 0.05%                                     |
| 23. German Shorthaired Pointer                  | 3                                       | 2,452                           | 0.1%                                      |
| 24. Australian Silky Terrier                    | 2                                       | 11,816                          | 0.02%                                     |
| 25. Australian Dingo                            | 1                                       | 376                             | 0.3%                                      |
| 26. Collie                                      | 1                                       | 4,448                           | 0.02%                                     |
| 27. Fox Terrier                                 | 1                                       | 23,092                          | < 0.01%                                   |
| 28. Maremma Sheepdog                            | 1                                       | 1,456                           | 0.07%                                     |
| 29. Great Dane                                  | 1                                       | 3,068                           | 0.03                                      |

\* Includes Red/Blue Heeler, Smithfield Cattle Dog

\*\* Terrier was used where it was unknown what type of terrier was responsible for the attack

\*\*\* This represents the percentage of the breed that has been reported to have attacked. Please note that this information is only indicative of reported attacks and may not accurately reflect the total number of attacks that have occurred in this period.

## 4.2 Crossbreed Identified as Involved in Attacks

| Crossbreed                                      | Number of attacks breed was involved in | Number of breed on Register | % of breed reported as having attacked*** |
|---|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Unknown                                      | 59                                      | N/A                         | N/A                                       |
| 2. Australian Cattle Dog                        | 40                                      | 15,344                      | 0.3%                                      |
| 3. American Pitbull Terrier and Pitbull Terrier | 31                                      | 2093                        | 1.5%                                      |
| 4. Bull Terrier (Staffordshire)                 | 30                                      | 13,201                      | 0.2%                                      |
| 5. Australian Kelpie                            | 25                                      | 12,460                      | 0.2%                                      |
| 6. Bull Terrier                                 | 24                                      | 2,178                       | 1.0%                                      |
| 7. Rottweiler                                   | 22                                      | 7,521                       | 0.3%                                      |
| 8. Rhodesian Ridgeback                          | 19                                      | 2,337                       | 0.8%                                      |
| 9. German Shepherd Dog                          | 16                                      | 11,078                      | 0.1%                                      |
| 10. Border Collie                               | 12                                      | 21,835                      | 0.05%                                     |
| 11. Labrador Retriever                          | 11                                      | 16,917                      | 0.06%                                     |
| 12. Terrier                                     | 11                                      | Less than 300               | N/A                                       |
| 13. Jack Russell Terrier                        | 8                                       | 12,721                      | 0.06%                                     |
| 14. Maltese                                     | 6                                       | 49,366                      | 0.01%                                     |
| 15. American Staffordshire Terrier              | 4                                       | 683                         | 0.6%                                      |
| 16. Doberman                                    | 3                                       | 579                         | 0.5%                                      |
| 17. Siberian Husky                              | 3                                       | Less than 300               | N/A                                       |
| 18. Dalmatian                                   | 3                                       | Less than 300               | N/A                                       |
| 19. Alaskan Malamute                            | 2                                       | Less than 300               | N/A                                       |
| 20. Australian Dingo                            | 2                                       | Less than 300               | N/A                                       |

Note: To determine the 'breed' of those described as crossbreed dogs, the first breed identified in the animal's record determined the category in which it was placed.

## 4.3. Types of Attacks

| Description  | Number     | Percentage of total attacks |
|--|------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Total number of reported attacks</b>                    | <b>873</b> |                             |
| Number of attacks involving children                       | 102        | 11.7%                       |
| Number of attacks involving adults                         | 377        | 43.2%                       |
| Number of attacks involving animals                        | 336        | 38.5%                       |
| Number of attacks involving livestock                      | 84         | 9.6%                        |
| Number of attacks occurring in a public place              | 520        | 59.6%                       |
| Number of attacks occurring on private property            | 258        | 29.5%                       |
| Number of attacks where it was unknown where it took place | 95         | 10.9%                       |
| Number of attacks where dog was not under control of owner | 121        | 13.9%                       |
| Number of attacks where dog was allegedly under control    | 687        | 78.9%                       |
| Attacks where unknown if owner was present or in control   | 65         | 7.4%                        |

Dog attacks may involve more than one adult/child and/or animal/livestock; therefore the numbers and percentages may not appear to add up to 100%.

#### 4.4. Reported Injuries

Injuries reported varied from person to animal. It appears from the reports that attacks on other animals were far more likely to result in injury. However, there is evidence that the data relating to attacks on people may be incomplete, therefore caution should be taken when drawing any conclusions.

#### 4.5 Dog Attacks on animals – Known outcomes

|   |            |       |
|---|------------|-------|
| <b>Number of reported attacks</b>   | <b>873</b> |       |
| % of attacks resulting in death of animal                                   | 305        | 34.9% |
| % of attacks resulting in hospitalisation of animal or veterinary treatment | 262        | 30.0% |
| % of attacks where unknown if there was an injury                           | 218        | 25.0% |

#### 4.6 Dog Attacks on people – Known outcomes

|  |     |       |
|--|-----|-------|
| % of attacks where hospitalisation was required                | 38  | 4.4%  |
| % of attacks where medical treatment was required              | 2   | 0.2%  |
| % of attacks where no injury was recorded                      | 2   | 0.2%  |
| % of attacks where its unknown if an injury or what injury was | 829 | 95.0% |

Dog attacks may involve more than one person/child and/or animal, therefore the numbers and percentages may not add up to 100%.

Victims are not compelled to report attacks. Injury data is based on information provided by those people who did report to councils.

Please note that although a physical injury may have been reported, psychological injuries may not have been.

#### 4.7. Action taken

| <b>Action taken</b>            | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Reported attacks               | 873           |                   |
| Dangerous Dog Declaration made | 97            | 11.1%             |
| Court action taken             | 29            | 3.3%              |
| Penalties issued               | 142           | 16.3%             |
| Warnings issued                | 267           | 30.6%             |
| Destruction of dog             | 77            | 8.8%              |
| No action taken                | 52            | 6.0%              |
| Other/unknown                  | 209           | 23.9%             |

**Note:** Where no action was taken, notes accompanying the dog attack reports indicate that in the majority of cases, the attacking dog/s or their owners could not be located.

#### 4.8. Registration status of dogs involved in attacks

| <b>Status</b>   | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Total number of reported attacks                      | 873           | N/A               |
| Total number of dogs involved                         | 1179*         | N/A               |
| Dogs not microchipped                                 | 269           | 22.8%             |
| Dogs microchipped only                                | 252           | 21.3%             |
| Dogs microchipped and registered                      | 386           | 32.7%             |
| Dogs not known if microchipped or lifetime registered | 326           | 27.6%             |

\* Percentages based on total number of dogs involved, not total number of reported attacks.

#### 4.9. Desexed status and sex of attacking dogs

|   | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| Number of attacking dogs                              | 1179*  | N/A        |
| Number of dogs – male                                 | 481    | 40.8%      |
| Number of dogs – female                               | 308    | 26.1%      |
| Number of dogs where gender was unknown               | 350    | 29.7%      |
| Number of attacking dogs desexed                      | 181    | 15.4%      |
| Number of attacking dogs undesexed                    | 374    | 32.7%      |
| Number of attacking dogs where desexed status unknown | 585    | 49.6%      |

Figures and percentages may not add up to the total number of dogs involved in attacks as data was only collected on dogs one and two, but it may have been reported that there were up to five dogs involved in a particular attack.