

DOG ATTACKS

Prevention is better than cure

Attacks by dogs on humans, other companion animals and livestock are largely preventable.

Why do dogs attack?

All dogs, regardless of age, breed or temperament, have the capacity to cause harm or injury to another animal or person, especially children and the elderly.

A dog's likelihood of biting depends on at least five interacting factors:

- Heredity (genes, breed)
- Early experiences
- Socialisation and training
- Health (physical and psychological)

Where do dog attacks occur?

The majority of dog attacks reported to Council occur in public places.

Attacks by dogs in a public place tend to occur outside the dog's own home on the footpath or road. This is mainly a result of the dog not being properly confined to its property or under effective control.



Many **unreported** dog attacks occur in the home and involve family members being bitten by their own dog.

Who can be attacked?

- Children under 5 years of age are at most risk of attack, with a high number of those being either family or friends of the dog owner (*Australian Veterinary Association, Dangerous dogs - a sensible solution*).
- Children are at least three times more likely than adults to experience a bite needing medical attention.
- Adults and other animals are more likely to be attacked in public places.

Excuses Animal Management Officers hear from dog owners after their dog has attacked:

- "But my dog is friendly to everyone and everything"
- "But my dog lets my children do anything to him and he doesn't care"
- "But my dog never leaves the yard even without a fence"
- "But my dog is obedient and will just walk by my side if I let him off the lead"
- "But my dog is too old to wander, he would rather sleep"
- "But my dog plays with our cat all the time"

DON'T:

Do not let children play unsupervised with dogs. The proximity of a child's face to the dog increases the risk of facial injuries.

Preventing a dog attack is your responsibility

- Ensure your dog is unable to escape over, under or through the fence or enclosure where it is kept.
- Ensure your dog is always under effective control in a public place and held by a lead no longer than two metres.
- You must be able to physically control your dog.
- As an owner you must understand basic dog behaviour and use appropriate training techniques such as positive reinforcement (praise or punishment) to help train your dog.
- Training and socialising your dog decreases its fear, anxiety and aggression towards other dogs and people.
- Training improves a dog's ability to cope with new situations.
- Desexing your dog can decrease the risk of it wandering or displaying aggressive behavior.
- Male entire dogs are at a greater risk of increased aggression. Guarding behavior can be displayed from the entire male towards humans and other animals.
- Entire females add to the risk by attracting males.

Your dog and children

Children's natural behaviours (including running, yelling, hitting and darting movements) as well as pulling the dog's fur put them at a greater risk of dog bite injuries.

Always supervise children as bites tend to occur when they are playing, patting or disturbing a dog while it is sleeping or eating.

The proximity of a child's face to the dog also increases the risk of facial injuries.

- Children should always ask the owner's permission before approaching a dog.
- Do not approach a dog while it is sleeping, eating or caring for its puppies.
- Do not allow children unsupervised around your dog.
- If allowed by the owner, stroke the dog's back but avoid touching the dog's head.
- Avoid hugging dogs.
- Avoid prolonged eye contact or putting your face in the dog's face.

What happens after a dog bites?

If your dog rushes at or chases any person, you (the owner) may be:

- Issued a fine and
- Your dog may be declared **MENACING**

If your dog attacks or injures another person or animal:

- Fines will be issued.
- Your dog may be declared as **DANGEROUS** and signs will be attached to your premises to warn visitors.
- Your dog will be under strict enclosure and control rules.
- You may face legal action from Council and civil action from the person attacked.
- Your dog may be seized and/or destroyed by Council.

What if you are attacked?

- Seek appropriate medical attention.
- Report the attack to Council on (02) 6071 5100 or our via our website www.towong.vic.gov.au



DO:

Ensure your dog is always under effective control in a public place and held by a lead no longer than 2 metres.