

Is Microchipping of Dogs Enough? Is there a better way?

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J Ozanne-Smith, K Ashby, V Z Stathakis (2001) found that Australia had the lowest dog bite death rates of 0.004/100,000 when compared to Canada (0.007/100,00) and the United States (0.05-0.07/100,000). A study of European fatalities due to dog attacks found that the incidence was 0.009/100,000 in 2016 and had increased at a rate of several percent per year. This increase in rate could not be explained by changes to either human or dog populations. (S. Sarenbo, P Andreas Svenson. 2021)

Dog bites are a largely an unrecognised and growing public hospital burden. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found an incidence rate of 36.9/ 100,000 accounting for 40% of hospitalised injury cases and 1.8% of total injury hospitalisations.

The NSW Government is currently reviewing the Companion Animal Act 1998 and is considering recommendations from the coroner which include licencing owners and compulsory education programs for dog owners. The emphasis would be on safety and risk assessment. Stricter conditions may apply to owners of specific breeds.

24 fatal dog attack incidents that occurred between 2002 and 2023 in Australia were assessed.

14 females and 10 males were involved. As many of the attacks involved female children under 5 this difference is not considered significant.

NSW had 12, Victoria 4, Queensland 4, Western Australia 2, ACT 1, Tasmania 1. This rank order is merely a reflection of each state's population.

Most of the attacks involved children under 5 years. (12/24) The majority of these were children 1 year or younger.

The remaining attacks were 40 years old (4/12), 50 years old (3/12), 60 years old (2/12) and over 70 (3/12).

The majority of the attacks occurred within the home (15/24).

Others were when child was at the grandparent's or babysitter's house (3/24) and one involved a house sitter who was looking after the dogs. These could also be considered home incidents giving a total of 19/24 where the victim was known to the dogs.

Only 2 incidents occurred in public. One the street and another on a public beach.

One incident involved a work situation when a meter reader entered a property and 2 were undisclosed.

Of significance is the finding that 19 of the 24 incidents were either the family dog, a friend's dog or where the dogs were known to the victim.

It has been found that approximately 40% of households have at least 1 dog with a surge of less experienced dog owners and many with dogs acquired since the onset of the COVID pandemic. (Animal Medicines Australia, 2022). Isolation during the pandemic meant these dogs were not effectively socialised.

S Hazel and I liankov (2024) found that over 1/3 of dog owners had previously been bitten by a dog and suggested that education programs may need to be directed at adults not just children.

The presentation presents thoughts on benefits and problems associated with the licencing proposition and the need for a targeted education program regarding safety around dogs.

References:

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2. Sarenbo S, Andreas Svensson P, Bitten or struck by dog: A rising number of fatalities in Europe, 1995-2016. *Forensic Science International* 318 (2021)
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024) Contact with Animals, AIHW, Australian Government
4. Pets in Australia: A national survey of pets and people. Animal Medicines Australia 2021 published 2022
5. S J Hazel, I liankov (2024) A public health campaign to increase awareness of the risk of dog bites in South Australia. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine* 231(2024)
6. Wikipedia List of fatal dog attacks Accessed May 1 (2025)

YEAR	STATE	GENDER	AGE	SITE	DOG OWNER	BREED	REFERENCE
2002	NSW	F	75	Home	Own dog	Bull mastiff * + Great Dane * Bull Mastiff	"Dogs that killed grandmother were placid, daughter tells inquest." SMH April 8, 2004 Retrieved May 18, 2025 1 :36
2006	NSW	F	4	neighbour's yard	Neighbours dog	Pig hunting dog Great Dane * Bull Mastiff	" Family's damages for mauling death revoked on appeal." L Hall, SMH April 17, 2012. Retrieved May 18, 2025 1:32
2007	Vict	F	1	Home	Own dog	1 of 5 pig hunting dogs in yard	"Pet Rottweiler mauls nine week old baby to death." J Medew, S-J Collins. The Age December 29 2007. Retrieved May 18, 2025 1:24
2009	NSW	F	3	Home of babysitter	Babysitter's own dogs	Bull Mastiff * 2 + Large cross breed * 2	"Coroner outlines Whitton toddler's mauling ." abc.net.au September 22, 2011. Retrieved May 18, 2025 1:20
2011	Vict	F	4	Home	Escaped dog	Pitt Bull	Parliament of Victoria Legislative Council "Inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs" March 2016
2013	NSW	M	2	Grandmother's yard	Grandmothers dog	Mastiff *	"Deeon Higgins ,2, mauled to death by mastiff cross in Deniliquin, NSW." M Morri, N Keene and AAP Daily Telegraph August 5, 2013. Retrieved May 18, 2025 1:03
2017	WA	F	58	Home	Own dog	Bull mastiff *	"Woman mauled to death by dog in Southern River ." perthnow.com.au August 2 2017. Retrieved 18 May, 2025 1:00 "Dog that fatally mauled owner to be put down as tributes flow for animal lover." 9news.com.au August 3 , 2017 Retrieved May 18 8:40
2017	ACT	F	46	Home	Own dog	Staffordshire Terrier cross	"Canberra woman died after own dog turned on her." A Back, SMH 30 Nov 2018. Retrieved May 18, 2025
2018	NSW	F	1	Street	Escaped family members dog	Rottweiler	"Tribute to 'adored' tot Kamillah, killed by Rottweiler." Rawthorne Sunday Telegraph March 4 2018. Retrieved May 18, 2025 12:47

2018	Vict	F	1	Home	Own dog	German wirehaired pointer	"New footage shows moment a killer dog was dragged from home where it mauled a child to death." B Graham, N Wolfe, news.com.au August 3, 2018. Retrieved May 18, 2025 11:27
2019	NSW	M	40	Home	Dogs lived at the house	Staffordshire Bull Terrier 2	"Man dies five weeks after Sydney dog attack." L Chung SMH March 2 2019 abc.net.au Retrieved May 18, 2025 11:17
2019	NSW	F	72	Home	Own dog	Staffie* Ridgeback	"Woman dies after being mauled by dog." stuff.co.nz 17 May 2019. Retrieved May 18, 2025 11:13.
2019	NSW	M	51	Home	Own dog	Staffordshire bull terrier	"Man dies from severe injuries caused by his pet dog in Nowra." abc.net.au 13 June 2019. Retrieved May 18, 2025 "American Staffordshire Terriers have killed four Australians this year" Y. Zuang, Z. Hope The Age July 11 2019. Retrieved May 18, 2025 11:04
2019	Vict	M	61	Home	Son's dog	American staffie	"American Staffordshire terriers have killed four Australians this year" Y. Zuang, Z. Hope The Age July 11 2019. Retrieved May 18, 2025 11:04
2020	NSW	F	91	Beach	Escaped dog	Bull Mastiff * Bull Arab Bull * 3	"Inquest into death of Ada Holland hears dogs had escaped Vincentia home a week earlier" abc.net.au 3 July 2023. Retrieved 18 May, 2025 10:59
2021	QLD	F	41	Home	House sitter ?	Pit Bull	"Woman dies after being attacked by three dogs in Maryborough abc.net.au 8 June 2021. Retrieved 18 May, 2025 10:50
2021	NSW	M	1	Home	Own dog	American staffie	"Inquest into the death of MJ." NSW Coroners Report! Findings released 17 Jan l 2025
2021	QLD	M	5	Unknown	Family friend's dog	Bull terrier* or. English bull terrier or American Bulldog	"Little boy Manny pictured after Christmas Eve dog attack on Gold Coast." 7News.com.au 27 December 2021 Retrieved 18 May, 2025 10:42 "Tributes flow for little Manny who died after a Gold Coast dog attack." H.Hales, news.com.au December 27, 2021
2022	QLD	M	2	Home	Own dog	Bull Arab	"Brave toddler, 2, mauled to death by family dog "fought until last breath" says dad." R Merrifield, mirror.co.uk 2 February 2022 Retrieved 18 May, 2025 10:27
2022	NSW	M	2	Motel where staying	Motels dogs	Rottweiler	"Inquest into the death of Jyedon Pollard" NSW Coroners Report Findings published 26 Feb 2025

2022	QLD	M	42	Meter reading	Owner's own dogs	Bull mastiff* + Rhodesian Ridgeback*	<p>"Fundraiser launched for Kane Minion's funeral as friends reveal his fiancée is "broken." news.com.au December 10, 2022. Retrieved May 18, 2025 10:20</p> <p>"Dogs that fatally mauled Energex contracted meter reader Kane Minion at a Greenbank property have been destroyed" abc news Wed 7 December. Retrieved May 18, 2025 16:45</p>
2023	NSW	F	1	Grandfather's yard	Escaped ?	Rottweiler * 2	<p>"Rottweilers that mauled baby to death are put down" news.com.au February 24, 2023 Retrieved May 18, 2025</p>
2023	WA	F	53	Home	Minding friend's dog	German Shepherd	<p>"Tracy Ridout : Perth mother on deathbed after rare dog bite infection Capnocytophaga canimorus "Perth Now August 26, 2023. Retrieved May 18, 2025</p>
2023	TAS	M	66	Home	Own dog	Rottweiler	<p>"Allens Rivulet tragedy: Noel Backhouse dies in fatal pet dog attack" Pulse Tasmania Friday October 20. Retrieved May 18, 2025</p>