

- enhanced powers for dog control officers to enter private premises.

Phase 2

7. Phase 2 is a longer-term objective that looks at changing attitudes and behaviours that give rise to high risk situations.

s.9(2)(g)(i)

Proposed timeline

8. You intend to seek Cabinet decisions by September 2016 and introduce legislative amendments to the House by December 2016.

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Accident Compensation Corporation and Local Government briefing

Document 14

Hon Nikki Kaye

Minister for the Accident Compensation Corporation

Hon Louise Upston

Associate Minister of Local Government

Copy to: Hon Peseta Sam Lotu-liga
Minister of Local Government

Title: **Information briefing: Enabling access to dog-related injury claim data**

Date: 15 July 2016

Key issues

The Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) is currently working with the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and other agencies to progress a two phase project to address the harmful behaviour of high risk dogs and high risk dog owners.

DIA does have information to support the project, but there are gaps in the data it holds. ACC is working with DIA to fill some data gaps by sharing existing information and considering a survey of dog-related injury claimants.

Local authorities could also benefit from data held by ACC about dog attack incidents. Sharing ACC data that includes personal information would, however, raise issues relating to privacy, ethics and the no-fault basis of the ACC Scheme.

DIA and ACC agree that ACC's injury prevention expertise could be used to educate the public about the risk and harm of dog attacks.

Actions sought

Note that the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) is assisting the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) to progress a project to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks by:

- providing dog-related injury claim data to DIA;
- considering the development of a survey of dog-related injury claimants; and
- considering the incorporation of DIA's dog safety messaging into ACC's injury prevention campaigns; and

note that ACC can provide dog-related injury claim data to local authorities, but it cannot provide detailed information that may be used to identify individuals.

Timeframe

At your convenience

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Direct phone line	After hours phone	Suggested 1 st contact
Jo Gascoigne	Policy Manager, DIA	04 494 0526		✓
Samantha Lay Yee	Policy Analyst, DIA	04 495 9450		
s.9(2)(a)	Head of Injury Prevention, Partnerships and Delivery, ACC	s.9(2)(a)	s.9(2)(a)	
s.9(2)(a)	Manager Customer Analytics, ACC			

Return to	Samantha Lay Yee, Level 7, 147 Lambton Quay		
DIA references	PLG-1725-38 4645616DA	LG201600438	
ACC briefing paper number	BP16-066		

Purpose

1. This briefing discusses the:
 - ability of Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) to share dog-related injury claim data with the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and local authorities;
 - potential for ACC to conduct a survey of dog-related injury claimants; and
 - use of ACC's injury prevention campaigns and strategies to promote DIA's messages about safety around dogs.

Background

2. On 9 April 2016, media reports focused on a dog bite incident in Takanini, Auckland. In that incident, seven-year-old Darnell Minarapa-Brown was bitten by his uncle's dog. Following that attack, local and national news media increased their reporting on dog attacks.
3. Accordingly, public interest in dog attacks and dog control issues has also increased. There is a growing public concern about the financial and emotional costs of dog attacks, and an expectation that central Government and local government will take further action to reduce the incidence of dog attacks.
4. The Associate Minister of Local Government wrote to all councils in early May 2016 seeking their suggestions for improvements to dog control law and information about innovative dog control practices.
5. On 12 May 2016, the Prime Minister and the Local Government New Zealand National Council hosted the Central Government/Local Government Forum. At the Forum, attendees agreed that both central government and local government can do more to improve public safety around dogs. The Prime Minister expressed a strong interest in seeing meaningful action.

Reducing the risk and harm of dog attacks

6. DIA is currently working with ACC, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and other agencies to progress a two phase project to address the harmful behaviour of high risk dogs and high risk owners.
7. The first phase focuses on introducing legislative and non-legislative measures over the next 12-24 months in order to:
 - enhance the ability of local authorities to take effective preventative action against high risk dog owners and high risk dogs;
 - encourage responsible dog ownership and discourage bad behaviour; and
 - reduce the number of high risk dogs, and neutralise aggressive tendencies.
8. The second phase has a longer-term objective to change attitudes and behaviours that give rise to high risk situations.

s.9(2)(g)(i)
9. The first phase of the project is currently underway. DIA is gathering and analysing information and data from a variety of sources, in order to develop proposals for consideration by Cabinet in September 2016.

DIA requires data to inform actions that will reduce the incidence of dog attacks

10. DIA requires a wide range of information about dogs, dog attacks, dog owners and councils to identify patterns, pinpoint problems, and increase confidence in the effectiveness of targeted solutions to reduce the incidence of dog attacks. It is also important for DIA to have benchmark data to measure the effectiveness of any policy decisions.
11. Since 2012, DIA has collated statistics from National Dog Database (NDD), ACC, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Justice. The statistics are high level. They indicate:
 - changes to the registered dog population;
 - growth in the cost and number of dog-related injury claims; and
 - decline in the number of prosecutions and fluctuations in the number of dog destruction orders issued by the courts.
12. Charts to demonstrate some trends from the statistics are attached as **Appendix A**. DIA acknowledges the statistics have limitations and further information is required.

ACC does not have a data field specific to dog bites

13. The data ACC collects about accidents, and the individuals injured in them, is largely reliant on the information claimants provide when a claim is lodged using the ACC45 form. ACC45 data is collected through electronic and paper based forms and is coded into practice management systems. There are a variety of mandatory and non-mandatory fields for claimants to complete when filling out the ACC45 form, and there is no field specifically dedicated to dog-related injuries, or injuries caused directly by dogs.
14. For example, it is mandatory for a claimant to indicate when their accident occurred, whether the accident occurred at work, and their occupation. Non-mandatory fields include the free text field on the ACC45 form. This is where ACC identifies dog-related injuries based on information if it is provided by doctors or clients.
15. Where claimants do provide a description of how their injury occurred in the free text field, there is a large degree of variability in the nature and quality of the descriptions claimants provide. These inconsistencies can make it difficult to search for a particular item or issue with a high degree of accuracy.

ACC is assisting DIA to fill dog control data gaps

16. In light of the recent meeting between the Minister for ACC and the Associate Minister of Local Government, ACC provided DIA with mandatory and non-mandatory information it holds about injuries caused or contributed by dogs, including:
 - location, date and scene of injuries,
 - activity of the claimant prior to the injury,
 - types and severity of injuries,
 - costs of treatment services and entitlements, and
 - demographic information about claimants.
17. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

18. DIA and ACC will continue working together to make best use of available data and find sources of new data. ACC does not have information about the breeds of dog that caused the particular injuries or about the relationship between the injured person and the dog. However, there is potential to seek further information about the circumstances of individual dog attacks.

ACC and DIA are considering a survey of dog-related injury claimants

19. In order to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks, DIA needs to understand the specific circumstances which enable dog attacks to happen. This includes any action/inaction by the dog owner, breed and characteristics of the dog, actions of the injured party and site of the incident. DIA also needs to understand the extent of harm and outcomes following dog attacks. This includes actions of the dog owner, actions of the council or police and consequences for injured party, the dog and its owner.
20. DIA is currently undertaking analysis of media reports of severe dog attacks, and consideration of case law, medical publications and academic research on the subject to develop a clear picture of situations in which there is a high risk of harm.
21. DIA will explore options with ACC for more detailed analysis using methods such as surveys or focus groups. A survey could be an appropriate method if it will answer specific questions that existing data is unable to address. Research of this nature typically takes two to three months to design and commission.
22. In pursuing such options, ACC would need to:
- establish that there is a solid link between the survey and preventing injury;
 - obtain approval of the ACC Ethics Committee—this would involve considering the value of the survey, how results may be used, and possible re-victimisation of respondents;
 - take into account the participants' ages or capacity to be surveyed; and
 - consider the possibility that using information for dog control purposes may discourage injured persons from seeking treatment or specifying the circumstances of the injury.

Local authorities are seeking access to dog-related injury claim data

23. In response to the Associate Minister's letter about improvements to dog control legislation and practice, 45 of the 67 local authorities provided their suggestions and comments. Four councils compared their own records of reported dog attacks with ACC claim data for their districts. Each considered that the number of attacks reported to the council were significantly lower than the number of claims being made for dog-related injuries within their district.
24. Whanganui District Council wrote: "Given the ACC claim statistics, Council is not being informed of all dog attacks. If there was compulsory reporting of attacks by the medical profession or by ACC then Council would be able to follow up with an investigation as to whether the dog should be subject to a classification (thereby mitigating any future incident) or whether a prosecution should be considered."

25. To effectively address the danger posed by high-risk dogs and high-risk owners within their districts, councils require accurate information about the presence and behaviour of such dogs and their owners. Councils consider that access to information held by ACC would enable them to investigate the incident leading to the injury claim, and take appropriate action to keep their community safe.
26. However, ACC cannot report personal information without specific client consent, obtained case by case.

ACC can only share statistical information on dog-related injuries

27. The ACC scheme operates on a no fault basis and information is collected first and foremost to manage the claim and assess eligibility. Cover is available by virtue of a person having suffered a personal injury and is not determined by how that injury occurred. While that information does have value in informing understanding of how and why accidents occur, it is unnecessary for the purpose of processing claims under the Privacy Act 1993 (the Act) and therefore ACC cannot require it.
28. ACC recognises the need to balance the sharing of information for public protection purposes with the requirements under the Act. ACC will continue to work with Ministers and officials on how information ACC currently collects can support local authority efforts around dog control.
29. ACC could share the statistical information it does collect on dog-related injuries with other agencies provided no personal information is included.

DIA plans to use ACC's injury prevention expertise to change the dog control narrative

30. DIA's analysis of New Zealand media articles published between 2011 and 2016 demonstrated a high amount of repetition, creating a public perception of a rise in the number and severity of dog attack incidents. Of the 275 articles published, there were only 59 separate incidents. Approximately 20 articles related to the attack in Murupara in March 2014, involving Sakurako Uehara who was seven years old at the time.
31. As part of the second phase of the project to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks, the Government has an opportunity to change the public narrative about dogs and dog attacks, and to change public behaviour which may contribute to dog attacks.

ACC has well developed injury prevention programmes

32. ACC prioritises its investment in injury prevention programmes, both locally and nationally. The ACC Injury Prevention Portfolio community has a number of long-term partnerships with community injury prevention experts throughout New Zealand who deliver child injury prevention awareness and education safety campaigns into schools, and to young families.
33. ACC will investigate how dog safety messages can be incorporated into several initiatives that sit within the Injury Prevention Portfolio. For example, for the next five years, ACC have partnered with Plunket to increase their capability on injury prevention issues to build awareness and understanding in parents and caregivers of children under five years. This initiative may provide a good vehicle to deliver dog safety messages.

34. Another potential opportunity to deliver dog safety messages may be available through the Safekids Aotearoa (Safekids) initiatives. With support from ACC, Safekids have developed home injury prevention education, safety checklist, the 'train the trainer' initiative, and an injury prevention roadshow to be delivered to 170,000 children and families each year (for 3 years). The aim is to reduce unintentional injuries in the home for children aged 0 to 10.
35. Longer term, there is an opportunity for ACC to assist DIA in developing a national education campaign about responsible dog ownership and safety around dogs. This could include developing a partnership with local government to deliver the campaign. Alternatively, it could be delivered through a number of ACC's long term partnerships, or through ACC Community Injury Prevention Consultants in schools and community coalition networks.
36. Further opportunities include increasing publicity in schools and communities about an existing dog safety phone app, 'A Dog's Story', which was produced by Pedigree and has been endorsed by dog control experts. ACC and DIA have been in contact with the team who introduced the app, and plans to meet to look at ways to increase its usage.

Next steps

37. In order to develop proposals for consideration by Cabinet in September 2016, ACC will continue to provide dog-related claim injury data to DIA, as needed.
38. ACC and DIA will explore options, such as a survey, to answer specific questions that existing data is unable to address. Officials will report to Ministers as this develops.
39. ACC will continue to work with Ministers and officials on how information ACC currently collects can support local authority efforts around dog control.
40. Over the next 12-24 months, ACC will work with DIA to promote dog safety and injury prevention messages.

Recommendations

41. We recommend that you:

- a) **note** that the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) is assisting the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) to progress a project to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks by:
 - i. providing dog-related injury claim data to DIA;
 - ii. considering the development of a survey of dog-related injury claimants; and
 - iii. considering the incorporation of DIA's dog safety messaging into ACC's injury prevention campaigns; and
- b) **note** that ACC can provide dog-related injury claim data to local authorities, but it cannot provide detailed information that may be used to identify individuals.



Jo Gascoigne
Policy Manager, Department of Internal Affairs

Hon Louise Upston
Associate Minister of Local Government

_____/_____/_____

s.9(2)(a)

Head of Injury Prevention Partnerships and Delivery, Accident Compensation Corporation

Hon Nikki Kaye
Minister for the Accident Compensation Corporation

_____/_____/_____

Appendix A: Summary charts of dog control statistics

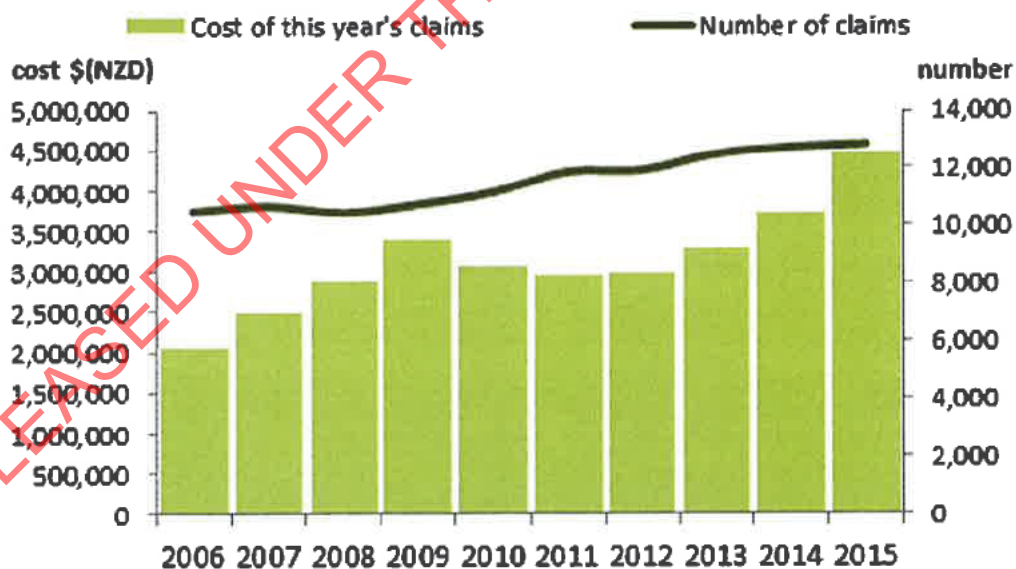
Estimated number of registered dogs in New Zealand as at year ended 31 May 2007-2015 (Source: National Dog Database)

The estimated number of registered dogs in New Zealand has remained relatively stable over the last five years, as demonstrated in the chart below. Data has been supplemented by estimates for councils with no recorded data for the year. However, the estimates are influenced by the lack of National Dog Database data downloads for 2008 and 2010.



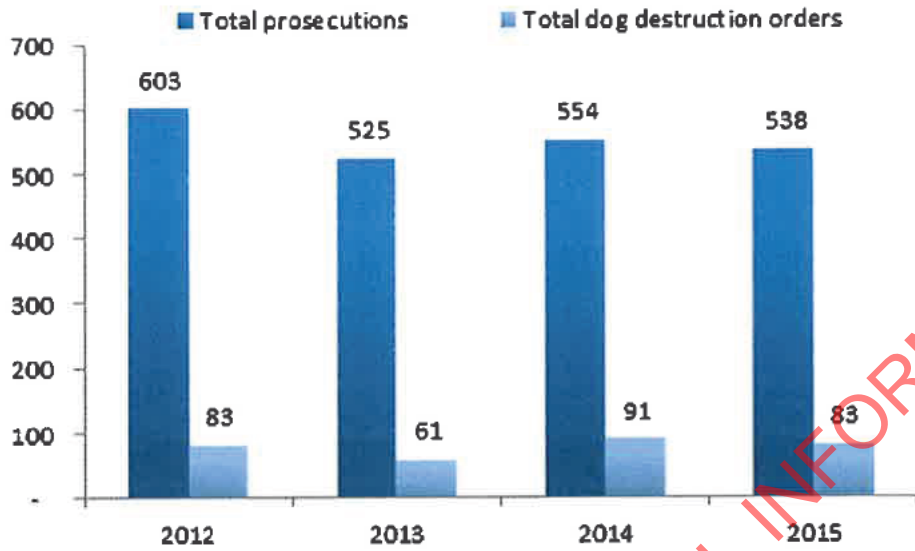
Number and cost of ACC dog-related injury claims as at year ended 30 June 2006-2015 (Source: Accident Compensation Corporation)

The number of claims for dog-related injury has increased since 2006. The total cost of dog-related injury claims per year has varied over this time, with a steady increase since 2012, as demonstrated in the chart below.



Dog Control Act prosecutions and destruction orders as at year ended 30 June 2012-2015
(Source: Ministry of Justice)

As demonstrated by the chart below, the number of prosecutions for dog control offences has decreased since 2012. The number of dog destruction orders issued by the courts has had little variation over the same period.



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Priority Routine

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Te Tari Taiwhenua

Local Government briefing

Hon Louise Upston

Associate Minister of Local Government

Copy to: Hon Peseta Sam Lotu-liga
Minister of Local Government


Title: Meeting with the New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons on
dog control issues, 20 July 2016

Date: 15 July 2016

Key issues	
The New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons is a stakeholder with a strong interest in the impact of dog attacks. You are meeting with them in order to gather their views and suggestions.	
Action sought	Timeframe
Read in preparation for your meeting.	By 20 July 2016

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Direct phone line	After hours phone	Suggested 1 st contact
Lisa Mackay	Policy Analyst	04 494 5733	s.9(2)(a)	✓
Jacqueline MacKenzie	Senior Policy Analyst	04 494 5765		
Return to	Lisa Mackay, Level 8, 147 Lambton Quay			
DMS references	PLG-5314-2_2	4647562DA		
Ministerial database reference	LG201600443			



Stephen Reilly
Policy Manager

Purpose

- You are meeting with Dr Sally Langley, President of the New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons (NZAPS); Jane Doherty, Executive Director of NZAPS; and potentially a third member of NZAPS on 20 July 2016, from 10:00 to 10:25 am. NZAPS wishes to discuss its concerns over the prevalence of dog bites and the injuries they can cause.
- Biographical information about Dr Langley is provided as **Appendix A**.

About the NZAPS

- The NZAPS is a non-profit, professional association devoted to the maintenance of ethical and professional standards within the field of cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery.
- Its members include most of New Zealand's plastic surgeons. The NZAPS holds an Annual Scientific Meeting to present research to its members.

The NZAPS has a strong interest in the impact of dog attacks

Media comment

- Dr Langley and the NZAPS have provided comment for media articles regarding dog attacks recently.
- In April 2016 Dr Langley made the following comments:
 - while plastic surgeons see injuries caused by a range of dogs, and acknowledge the difficulties in identifying breeds accurately, the most severe injuries they see are caused by certain aggressive breeds such as rottweilers, pit bulls, and pit bull crosses;
 - even small dog bites cause scars that are permanent and are devastating to a child and their family;
 - children have the highest frequency of dog attacks and they often suffer facial injuries due to their smaller height; and
 - the incidence of dog attacks seems to be increasing and she sees injuries come through "almost every day".

Research studies

- The NZAPS Annual Scientific Meeting is taking place from 15-17 July 2016. A paper titled "A 5 year review of dog bite injuries in Canterbury" will be presented on 17 July 2016. The study retrospectively analysed demographic data and injury outcomes of Christchurch dog bite patients between 2010 and 2015. The abstract notes that people living in more deprived areas, children, and Māori are overrepresented in Canterbury District Health Board dog bite injury figures. The abstract also notes that "pitbull type" dogs made up over 30 per cent of attacks where the dog breed was known.
- Dr Langley has also referenced in recent media comment, a study by Dr Zachary Moaveni and Jonny Mair. The study was presented at the 2015 NZAPS Annual Scientific Meeting. The study examined dog bite data from the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) across New Zealand between 2004 and 2014. The study found there were 99,000 dog bites during this time, 5,800 of which resulted in hospitalisation. The study noted that the groups at highest risk of dog bites were children under nine years

of age, Māori, and those living in low socio-economic areas. The study did not analyse dog breed as a factor in dog bite attacks. In correspondence with the Department, Dr Moaveni has noted that the public are poor at identifying breeds of dog and self-reporting of breed by victims is “notoriously unreliable”.

Points to raise

- You acknowledge that dog attacks are a serious issue in our communities, and have a significant impact on victims and their families.
- You are leading a review of New Zealand’s dog laws. The review aims to reduce both the risk of dog bites and the harm they cause. The review focuses on high-risk dogs and high-risk owners as the primary cause of dog attacks. At this stage of the review, high-risk dogs will be classified on behaviour and characteristics, rather than breed.
- The first phase of the review focuses on introducing legislative and non-legislative measures over the next 12 to 24 months, in order to:
 - enhance the ability of local authorities to take effective preventative action against high-risk dog owners and high-risk dogs;
 - encourage responsible dog ownership and discourage bad behaviour; and
 - reduce the number of high-risk dogs, and neutralise aggressive tendencies.
- Suggestions to achieve these aims so far include:
 - s.9(2)(f)(iv) mandatory neutering of all high-risk dogs; and
 - s.9(2)(f)(iv)
- The second phase has a longer-term objective, to change attitudes and behaviours that give rise to high-risk situations.
- The review is open to considering a wide range of options and is seeking suggestions on how to address the issues from a variety of sources. Any rule changes will be done in consultation with dog control experts and councils. You have recently met with councils; the New Zealand Institute of Animal Control Officers; and people with first-hand experience of dog attacks, to hear about their experiences and listen to suggestions on how to improve dog control in New Zealand.
- The Department is working with ACC to increase the information we hold about dog attacks, in order to inform the review.
- If probed for more information, or your views on specific measures, you could note the review is still at the information-gathering stage and a range of options are on the table at this time. You are happy to receive suggestions on measures to address dog attacks. A form to collect public feedback on dog control laws will be open on the govt.nz website from 1 – 12 August 2016.

Potential questions

- As surgeons, they see the results of dog attacks.
 - Do they have any opinions on the cause of dog attacks and what the Government or councils could do to address this?

- Have they noticed any common factors between their dog bite patients, such as location, type of injury, or behaviour prior to the attack?
- How many dog bite patients do they see?
- How long do patients remain in their care? How many surgeries can dog bite patients need?
- The NZAPS may have access to data about the impact of dog attacks on their work.
 - Can they estimate the proportion of their time that is taken up with treating dog bite patients, compared to other types of injuries?
 - Are figures available on the cost of this work (as a proportion of total costs and compared to the costs of treating other types of injuries) and where these resources could be applied otherwise?
- The education phase of the dog control review project will focus on injury prevention.
 - Can the NZAPS comment about whether its members have noticed any effect from injury prevention campaigns, such as a reduction in burns injuries following the 'smoke alarms in homes' campaign?
 - Are there any other types of injuries they used to see that are becoming less common, and do they have an opinion on how are they being prevented?
 - Without blaming the victims of dog attacks, are they aware of any particular actions victims have taken during a dog attack that reduced the severity of their injury?
- Councils have expressed concern that they have limited visibility of dog attacks, as injuries requiring medical attention are not always reported to them.
 - Do surgeons communicate with councils about dog attacks they are aware of?
 - Have they encouraged patients and/or their families to contact their council following the attack?
 - Would they be open to informing councils of incidents (with patient confidentiality considerations in mind)?

Hon Louise Upston
Associate Minister of Local Government

_____/_____/_____

Appendix A: Biographical information

	<p><i>Dr Sally Langley, President of the New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons</i></p> <p>Dr Langley is the first woman to hold the position of President of the NZAPS.</p> <p>She has been a consultant specialist plastic surgeon at the Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery Department of Christchurch Hospital since 1990. Her work includes most of the spectrum of plastic and reconstructive surgery.</p>
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Presentation to the Associate Minister of Local Government on Dog Bite Injuries

Recommendations

1. Strategies to minimise the frequency and severity of dog bite injuries (DBI) are required to improve public safety and reduce the burden on emergency and hospital services. It is likely that a broad range of strategies are needed to support the prevention of DBI eg education for the general public and dog owners, changes to dog control laws, injury prevention campaigns.
2. Injury prevention strategies should be developed to meet the needs of the most at risk and vulnerable groups – both in content and delivery (see below). Safety campaigns should also include strategies for those who intervene to break up a dog fight/attack.
3. A range of agencies need to work together to bring about change – particularly Central and Local Government - to reduce the incidence and trauma/costs associated with DBI.

What is already known about DBI in NZ?

1. Dog bite injuries are common in children and have a significant and long lasting emotional and physical impact on the victims.
2. Most injuries occur on private property and the face, head and neck region is most commonly affected in children.
3. The trend appears to indicate an increase in DBI.
4. Dog control is an international issue. A comprehensive national policy approach is required in New Zealand to promote education for young people and their caregivers, responsible dog ownership, and a review of current legislation around dog control and dangerous dogs.

Findings of Three Papers Reviewing DBI in New Zealand

The Burden of Dog Bite Injuries in New Zealand: 2004-2014.

The following information on dog bites comes from a review of the New Zealand public hospital services for the ten-year period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2014.

Mr Zac Moavani – Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon at Middlemore and Jonny Mair – medical student (*unpublished paper presented at NZAPS ASM 2015*)

Overview

1. There were 99,003 dog bites recorded during this period, with 5,842 cases requiring hospitalization and surgical management. A small number will need more than one surgery for reconstruction. (Information for this study came from a variety of sources including ACC and therefore provides the best representation of the injury burden from DBI at a national level)
2. The incidence of serious dog bite injuries rose nationally in New Zealand over the 10-year study period.
3. Children under 9 years of age and those from lower socioeconomic areas represent the highest risk subgroups.
4. In terms of ethnicity, Maori have the highest incidence and Asian patients the lowest. The reasons for this are unclear and may represent different dog ownership rates or attitudes towards education and behaviour around dogs, or



socioeconomic status. (Use of dogs to protect property may be more prevalent in some communities)

Conclusions

The incidence of dog-bite injuries continues to rise over this 10-year study period and in comparison with previously published rates in New Zealand. Additionally, more vulnerable population subgroups have been identified who are most likely to require hospitalization with serious dog-bite injuries. Current national legislation and policy around dog control and education in NZ appears to be inadequate in addressing these trends and is failing in particular the most vulnerable population subgroups.

A 5 Year Review of Dog Bite Injuries in Canterbury

Dr Rebecca McLean, Dr Blair York, Mr Dylan James

*Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Department, Christchurch, New Zealand
(unpublished paper presented at the NZAPS ASM 2016)*

Overview

Dog bite injuries in New Zealand are becoming increasingly prevalent with higher numbers of hospital admissions and associated costs to tertiary centres (and patients). This study retrospectively analysed demographic data and injury outcomes of Christchurch patients that sustained DBI in the last five years.

A total of 1,081 patients with DBI were admitted to the Christchurch Emergency Department (ED) or inpatient services over the last 5 years (1 October 2010 to 30 September 2015). In the 5 year review there was an annual average of 70.4 inpatient admissions and 145.8 ED admissions - an admission every 1.7 days. This does not include information from other treatment services such as GPs and After Hours clinics.

Certain demographic trends have been identified from the study.

- 26.5% of DBI occur in people living in the two poorest NZ Deprivation Index areas of Christchurch.
- Māori comprise 17.6% of total admissions but represent 8.1% of the population in Christchurch;
- Children under 10 years old account for 25% of inpatient admissions and only make up approximately 12% of the region's population. Children 0-4 are particularly at risk.
- Young children are more likely to be bitten on the face than an adult and are more likely to undergo an operation during their treatment.
- Māori children make up 24% of all under 10 year old injuries who require Inpatient admission.
- The most commonly recorded breed of attacking dog was Pitbull type (of the 29% of injuries where the breed of dog was known, 31.1% were reported as being pitbull type dogs – followed by police dogs).

Treatment

- Majority of people (75%) stay 2 days or less for an Inpatient Admission



- More than 75% of patients will require an operation during their admission and more than 91% of those need a General Anaesthetic - so despite most being a short admission, they are an expensive one.

A Retrospective Review of the Burden of Dog Bite Injuries on a Regional Plastic Surgical Service

Hill O.L., Bollard K.A., Bisson M

*Wellington Regional Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Department, Hutt Hospital, Lower Hutt, Wellington, New Zealand
(unpublished paper presented at the NZAPS ASM 2015)*

Background

The Wellington Regional Plastics Unit at Hutt Hospital is the tertiary referral centre for central New Zealand. It provides a comprehensive service with a wide range of Plastic and reconstructive procedures being performed annually. An audit of the dog bite presentations referred to the service was undertaken to determine the burden of dog bite injuries on a Plastics Department and how this data compares with previously published literature.

Method

A retrospective analysis of all dog bite injuries presenting or referred to the Plastics Unit between August 2008 and July 2014 was performed.

Results

209 presentations relating to dog bite injuries over a six year period were analysed. Analysis showed increasing rates of cases referred to the service each year. Both adult and child cases were included with an average age of 23.4 years. Children under the age of 10 accounted for 31% of all presentations. The majority of referrals were dog bite wounds to the face accounting for 50% of all cases. The site of the injury was associated with the age of the patient. Children were more likely to be bitten in the head and neck region, compared with adults who sustained bites to limbs, most commonly an upper limb. We report a low complication rate (of 2%) with no major complications. Many of the dogs were known to the victims.

Discussion

Dog bites are an escalating problem in NZ. In 2004, a study quoted 240 hospital admissions a year at considerable cost to ACC and the taxpayer. We show an increase in referrals over the six year period with the majority of cases involving specialty areas of the face. Over a third of presentations are children under the age of 10 consistent with other published data. This study highlights the magnitude of the problem reflected at a national level.

20 July 2016

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25 July 2016

Hon Louise Upston
 Associate Minister of Local Government
 Private Bag 18 888
 Parliament Buildings
 Wellington 6160

Dear Minister Upston

The Association welcomes the recently announced review of dog control laws and appreciated the opportunity to meet with you to discuss practical ways to reduce New Zealand's high rate of dog bite injuries and associated trauma. It is generally our members who treat the severest dog attack injuries in public hospitals and they are very keen to support activities to reduce harm, particularly to children who are most at risk of severe injury. I hope the summary of information provided by the Association will be helpful for the Review.

The Association believes a range of strategies is required to help reduce the number of dog bite injuries - including:

- better education for parents, care givers and dog owners about caring for children around dogs
- wider roll out of harm reduction and injury prevention initiatives aimed at children/families such as the Dogsmart programme and the Dog Box resource kit into schools, early childhood services, through Plunket etc – with priority given to at risk groups (children up to nine are at higher risk)
- a review of dog licensing legislation and penalties, with more penalty enforcement, particularly around penalties for owners of dogs that cause injury
- investigation into the practicality of banning certain acknowledged dangerous dog breeds and identification of at-risk dogs and at-risk owners
- consideration of the wider child protection issues
- ensuring agencies work together to bring about change – particularly Central and Local Government. This should include sharing of information between councils and CYFS/police when children are at risk.

The Association will publicise the Review to our members and encourage them to make individual submissions. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Kenealy", is written over the typed name.

John Kenealy FRCS FRACS (PLAS)
President of the New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons

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Local Government briefing

Hon Louise Upston
Associate Minister of Local Government

Copy to: Hon Peseta Sam Lotu-liga
Minister of Local Government

Title: Information briefing: Engagements and next steps for reducing the risk and harm of dog attacks

Date: 5 August 2016

Key issues

You intend to announce Government policy decisions to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks at the annual conference of the New Zealand Institute of Animal Control Officers on 22 September 2016.

In order to meet this target, we are planning public and stakeholder engagement, communications opportunities, and development of policy proposals for Cabinet consideration.

To ensure widespread understanding and compliance with any new legislative measures, we propose a staged approach to implementation of the policy decisions.

Action sought

Discuss with officials the upcoming work towards policy decisions to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks and a potential strategy for implementation of such decisions

Timeframe

At your convenience

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Direct phone line	After hours phone	Suggested 1 st contact
Jo Gascoigne	Policy Manager	04 494 0526	s.9(2)(a)	✓
Samantha Lay Yee	Policy Analyst	04 495 9450		

Return to	Samantha Lay Yee, Level 7, 147 Lambton Quay		
DMS references	PLG – 1725-38	876036DB	
Ministerial database reference	LG201600476		

Purpose

1. This briefing provides an update on recent and upcoming engagements in relation to the policy project to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks.
2. It attaches a draft timetable of policy, engagement and communications activities leading up to the New Zealand Institute of Animal Control Officers (NZIACO) conference on 22 September 2016, as **Appendix A**.
3. This briefing also considers potential approaches to the implementation of policy decisions.

We are using information gathered from recent stakeholder engagements to inform policy development

4. On 4 and 6 July 2016, you met with individuals who have had first-hand experience of dog bites in Auckland and Wellington. Attendees expressed concern about out-of-control of dogs, particularly in public places. Only some the attendees felt that the local authority responded appropriately to their situation. We are using this feedback in our consideration of measures around dog owner responsibility and regulatory capabilities of local authorities.
5. On 15 July 2016, officials met with the directors of BARK NZ, an organisation which promotes dog safety education in schools. BARK NZ expressed concern about the methods and expertise of individuals teaching dog safety education. We are using this feedback in our consideration of measures around consistency and delivery of dog safety messages.
6. On 20 July 2016, you met with members of the New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons (NZAPS). NZAPS noted three studies by its members which indicated trends in the dog bite injuries that are treated by plastic surgeons in New Zealand. According to the research, the highest risk groups are children under nine years old, people of Māori or Pacific Island descent and people living in low-socio economic areas. We are considering NZAPS suggestions for change to dog control legislation.
7. On 3 August 2016, officials met with Auckland Council animal management. The Council provided an update on Operation Phoenix, an initiative to reduce the number of unregistered menacing and dangerous dogs in the Auckland region. The Council expressed concerns about the safety and wellbeing of its animal management officers, following threats and violence from some dog owners. We are using this feedback in our consideration of measures to address high risk dog owners. We are also considering Auckland Council's suggestions for change to dog control legislation.

Councils are still responding to your request for dog control information

8. On 19 May 2016 you wrote to all councils requesting:
 - 8.1 the submission of annual dog control policies and practices reports for the year ended 30 June 2015,
 - 8.2 comments on the Dog Control Act 1996 and innovative dog control practices.
9. You sent a follow up letter to all councils on 15 July 2016 acknowledging their response or lack of response, and seeking a further response where required.

10. As at 4 August 2016, all 67 councils have either provided all of the requested information, or notified us of a delay in providing the requested information. The number of responses to your letters to date are summarised in the table below:

Information requested	Submitted by council	Council has advised of delay
Annual dog control policies and practices report for the year ended 30 June 2015	59 (88%)	8 (12%)
Comments on the Dog Control Act 1996 and innovative dog control practices.	56 (83%)	11 (16%)

11. We are currently following up with councils and expect to receive all outstanding information by 4pm on 9 August 2016.
12. On 29 August 2016, we will provide you with a full report of the suggestions for change to the Dog Control Act 1996, and examples of innovative dog control practices from all 67 councils. This report will be provided to you with a summary of feedback from the public online engagement survey.

ACC is considering engagement with dog-related injury claimants

13. On 15 July 2016, we provided a joint briefing to you and the Minister for the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) about the availability and limitations of ACC's dog-related injury claim data.
14. ACC is currently considering the feasibility of a survey of dog-related injury claimants to seek further information about the circumstances of serious dog attacks which required hospitalisation. We understand there are a range of ethical concerns about engaging with claimants, particularly in light of the ACC's no-fault principle. There are concerns about timing and whether information collected via the engagement would be able to inform policy proposals. We will provide you and the Minister for ACC with a joint briefing on 17 August 2016 (TBC).
15. We consider that feedback from our public online engagement survey will be able to fill some information gaps about the circumstances of dog attacks.

We are working towards your announcement of policy decisions at the NZIACO conference

16. At this stage, we have seven weeks until your intended announcement of policy decisions at the NZIACO conference on 22 September 2016. Policy deliverables, upcoming meetings and communications opportunities are summarised in the work plan attached as **Appendix A**.

17. The work can be divided into the three areas:

- a) *policy development*: we are developing policy proposals for Cabinet consideration;

- b) *stakeholder engagement:*
- i. ministerial engagement: we are supporting your upcoming engagements with Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), local government, rural dog owners, dog behavioural experts, and other stakeholders. We are providing updates to stakeholders you have recently met with; and
 - ii. departmental engagement: we are meeting with a wide variety of stakeholders (including LGNZ, animal control staff, dog breed clubs, animal welfare organisations and government agencies) to address assumptions and information gaps, and to test our policy thinking. We are providing updates to stakeholders we have recently met with; and
- b) *public engagement and communications:*
- i. online survey: from 1 August 2016 until 14 August 2016, we are capturing and analysing public submissions to the online engagement survey, to inform policy development. As at 5 August 2016, we have received more than 2,000 survey responses; and
 - ii. communications: we are working with your office to promote the public survey and the overall policy project.

We propose an incremental approach to the implementation of any policy decisions

18. Our two-phase policy project to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks will achieve its aim by improving the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) and encouraging a cultural shift towards more responsible dog ownership.
19. The first phase involves legislative change; this phase will be complete when the changes come into force. The second phase takes a long-term approach to encourage behavioural change. This phase will be complete when the number of serious dog attacks has reduced and remains stable.
20. We propose a long lead in time for any amendments to the Act, coupled with guidance and education, before the changes come into force. This overlap between the first and second phases will enable New Zealanders to understand the implications of any legislative change, and prepare for the changes by adjusting their behaviour.
21. s.9(2)(g)(i)
22. A potential timeline for implementation is attached as **Appendix B**.

Recommendations

23. We recommend that you **discuss** with officials the upcoming work towards policy decisions to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks, and a potential strategy for implementation of such decisions. **Yes/No**



Jo Gascoigne
Policy Manager

Hon Louise Upston
Associate Minister of Local Government

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Appendix A: Draft dog control policy project work plan – to announcement

The table below provides an overview of recent and upcoming work to progress the dog control policy project to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks until your announcement of policy decisions at the New Zealand Institute of Animal Control Officers (NZIACO) conference on 22 September 2016. The work is separated into three broad workstreams (though we acknowledge there are some overlaps): policy development, stakeholder engagement, and public engagement and communications.

Week beginning	25 July (and prior)	1 August	8 August	15 August	22 August	29 August	5 September	12 September	19 September	
Project Milestones		Mon 1: Public engagement survey opens	Sun 14: Public engagement survey closes		Fri 26: Draft Cab paper and RIS to AMoLG for consideration	Wed 31: Public release of survey results	Mon 5: Final Cab paper and RIS ready for lodging		Mon 19: Cab decisions on policy proposals	
									Thu 22: NZIACO Conference	
									Thu 22: Public announcement of policy decisions	
Policy development										
Stages of policy development	Policy development			Agency consultation on draft Cabinet paper and draft RIS		AMoLG to consider draft Cabinet paper RIS panel to consider draft RIS		EGI and Cabinet to consider policy proposals		
Cabinet paper development	Policy development and drafting of paper and RIS			Wed 11: Draft paper and RIS to agencies for consultation	Fri 19: Receive and incorporate LGNZ and agency comments	Prepare cover briefing and revise draft paper	Mon 29: Feedback from AMoLG Wed 31: Finalise paper	Sign-out cover briefing, paper and RIS	Wed 14: Consideration by EGI	Mon 19: Consideration by Cabinet
RIS development				Test proposals with LGNZ mayoral working group		Mon 22: Draft RIS to RIS panel for consideration	Tue 30: RIS panel sign-off Wed 31: Finalise RIS	Thu 8: Lodge paper and RIS with Cabinet Office		
Analysis of public survey submissions		Capture and analysis of survey submissions		Prepare cover briefing and summary of submissions						
Policy deliverables to AMoLG	Fri 15: Joint briefing to AMoLG and Minister for ACC about ACC data	Fri 5: Briefing to AMoLG about progress on dog control policy project		Wed 17: Joint briefing to AMoLG and Minister for ACC about release of ACC data	Mon 29: Briefing to AMoLG about analysis of council feedback and public survey submissions (attach draft press release) Fri 26: Briefing to AMoLG attaching draft paper for consideration		Mon 5: Briefing to AMoLG attaching final paper and for lodging			

Week beginning	25 July (and prior)	1 August	8 August	15 August	22 August	29 August	5 September	12 September	19 September
Stakeholder engagement									
Ministerial meetings	Mon 4 and Wed 6: Meetings with dog attack victims Tue 5: Discussion with National Party caucus			Mon 15: Meeting with Federated Farmers, Rural Women and rural dog owners Tue 16: Meeting with LGNZ	TBC: Meeting with NZ Institute of Animal Control Officers TBC: Meeting with dog behaviour specialists				Thu 22: NZIACO conference
Departmental support for ministerial meetings	Fri 1 and Mon 4: Runsheets for victims meetings Fri 1: Briefing to AMoLG about proposed strategy to address high risk dogs and high risk owners			Thu 11: Runsheet for rural dog owners meeting Thu 11: Aide memoire for meeting with LGNZ	Fri 12: Aide memoire for meeting with NZIACO TBC: Aide memoire for meeting with dog behaviour specialists				Fri 9: Aide memoire, speech and Q and A for NZIACO conference (also see 'Ministerial communications' below)
Departmental meetings	Fri 15: Meeting with BARK NZ Fri 29-Sun 31: GovHack 2016 event Fri	Wed 3: Meeting with Auckland Council (Dog strategy) Fri 5: Meetings with MPI and ACC	Ride along with Auckland Council animal management officer Meetings with animal management officers (Auckland and Wellington)	Meeting with NZ Kennel Club TBC: Meetings with TradeMe, American Staffordshire Terrier Club, American Pit Bull Terrier Association, Paw Justice, SPCA and HUHA	TBC: Meetings with NZ Police, NZ Post, Housing Corporation NZ and Plunket				Thu 22: NZIACO conference
Public engagement and communications									
Stages of public engagement	Announce and develop online engagement survey	Public engagement survey open	Follow-up engagement, including summary of public feedback						Announce policy proposals
Ministerial communications									
Media releases		Mon 1: Release announcing feedback survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging submissions 	Fri 12: Release before closing of survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminder to participate Thanking submitters Noting number of submissions received to date Next steps 			Wed 31: Release summarising feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key themes in feedback Thanking submitters Next steps 			Thu 22: Release announcing proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key proposals Links to detailed proposals Implementation next steps Q&A on proposals

Week beginning	25 July (and prior)	1 August	8 August	15 August	22 August	29 August	5 September	12 September	19 September
Speeches									Thu 22: Speech to NZIACO conference announcing proposals
Social media (Facebook and Twitter)		Mon 1: Post link to feedback survey on DIA Facebook page	Mon 8: Post reminder to submit Fri 12: Post reminder of closing on Sunday	Mon 15: Post thanks to submitters		Wed 31: Post link to summary of feedback			Thu 22: Post link to proposals
Optional ministerial/parliamentary engagement		Verbal update to caucus Email to ministers (or all MPs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background about policy project Link to survey Encourage promotion of submissions to constituents Solicit views 	Oral parliamentary question to highlight feedback survey	Verbal update to caucus Meet with any Ministers (or MPs) expressing views and interest in the issue to listen to their concerns		Verbal update to caucus Email to ministers (or all MPs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Link to feedback summary Next steps 	Oral parliamentary question to highlight feedback received		Verbal update to caucus Oral parliamentary question to highlight proposal announcement Email to ministers (or all MPs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Link to proposals
Departmental activity									
Dog control page on DIA website (https://www.dia.govt.nz/Resource-material-Dog-Control-Index)		Mon 1: Notice of and links to survey		Mon 15: Update notice and remove link		Wed 31: Update notice and publish summary of feedback			Thu 22: Publish full proposals on website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet paper Information sheet
DIA-related websites updates		Mon 1: Notice of and links to survey		Mon 15: Update notice and remove links		Wed 31: Update notice and link to summary of feedback			Thu 22: Notice of proposals
DIA Facebook page		Mon 1: Post link to feedback survey	Mon 8: Post reminder to submit Fri 12: Post reminder survey closing	Mon 15: Post thanks to submitters		Wed 31: Post link to summary of feedback			Thu 22: Post link to proposals
Emails to interested stakeholders (Govt agencies, LGNZ, SOLGM, NZIACO, dog attack victims, NZAPS etc)		Email update on policy project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link to survey 	Email update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link to press release Next steps 			Email update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link to press release Next steps 			Email update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link to press release Next steps
Supporting comms tools to be provided									
Message map		Update message map		Update message map		Update message map			New message map based on proposals
Talking points									Talking points based on proposals

Appendix B: Draft dog control policy project implementation plan – post-announcement

We propose a long lead-in time for any amendments to the Dog Control Act 1996, coupled with guidance and education, before the changes come into force. Potential timeframes are set out in the table below. This will enable New Zealanders to understand the implications of any legislative change, and prepare for the changes by adjusting their behaviour.

Sep 2016	Oct 2016	Nov 2016	Dec 2016	Jan 2017	Feb 2017	Mar 2017	Apr 2017	May 2017	Jun 2017	Jul 2017	Aug 2017	Sep 2017	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	Dec 2017	Onwards	
Legislative development											Enactment						
Develop and issue drafting instructions to Parliamentary Counsel Office (PCO)	PCO to draft amendment bill				Consultation on exposure draft	LEG to approve draft bill for introduction	Introduction	Select committee	First reading	Second reading and Committee of the Whole House	Third reading Assent					Changes come into force	Development of regulations
Implementation																	
Develop guidance about new policy measures	Promote responsible dog ownership and encourage registration (For example, a registration amnesty)								Continue to develop and refine guidance				Promote guidance about new policy measures			Enforcement of new measures	Implementation of regulations

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Priority Routine

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Te Tari Taiwhenua

Local Government briefing

Hon Louise Upston

Associate Minister of Local Government

Title: Information briefing: meeting with Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) to discuss the dog control review

Date: 11 August 2016

Key issues

You are meeting with members and staff of LGNZ to discuss the dog control review. LGNZ has also invited representatives from the wider local government sector.

A summary of represented councils' views on dog control and the current legislation can be found as **Appendix A**.

Action sought

Read prior to your meeting

Timeframe

16 August 2016

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Direct phone line	After hours phone	Suggested 1 st contact
Morgan Harrison	Policy Advisor	04 495 9315		✓
Stephen Reilly	Policy Manager	04 495 9303	s.9(2)(a)	

Return to	Morgan Harrison, Level 8, 147 Lambton Quay	
DMS references	PLG 5301-1_3	4669387DA
Ministerial database reference	LG201600496	


Stephen Reilly
Policy Manager

Purpose

- You are meeting with members and staff of LGNZ on 16 August 2016, to discuss the dog control review. LGNZ has invited representatives of the wider local government sector to participate. A summary of each represented council's view on dog control and the current legislation can be found as **Appendix A**.

About the meeting

- You will be meeting the following people to discuss the dog control review:
 - Lawrence Yule, President, LGNZ (by phone);
 - Mayor Brendon Duffy, Horowhenua District Council;
 - Mayor Lyn Patterson, Masterton District Council;
 - Mayor Don Cameron, Ruapehu District Council (by phone);
 - Clive Manley, Chief Executive, Ruapehu District Council (by phone);
 - Steve Costelloe, Manager, Regulatory Services, Ruapehu District Council (by phone);
 - Mayor Wayne Guppy, Upper Hutt City Council;
 - Richard Harbord, Manager, Planning and Regulatory Services, Upper Hutt City Council;
 - Councillor Margaret Cousins, Hutt City Council;
 - Les Dalton, Regional Manager Animal Control, Hutt City Council, and President of the New Zealand Institute of Animal Management (NZIAM);
 - Jeanette Bullen, Acting Chief Executive, Society of Local Government Managers;
 - Malcolm Alexander, Chief Executive, LGNZ; and
 - Clare Wooding, Principal Policy Advisor, LGNZ.
- In May 2016 you wrote to all councils, requesting: a copy of their annual dog control reports; suggestions to improve dog control legislation; and examples of innovative practices. A summary of each represented council's response to your request is attached as **Appendix A**.

Hon Louise Upston
Associate Minister of Local Government

_____/_____/_____

Appendix A: Represented councils' views on dog control and current legislation

Horowhenua District Council

- The Council says that in general terms, the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) is able to be used effectively to assist in responsible dog ownership, and can assist in the control of 'menacing' and 'dangerous' dogs. The Council suggests alternative solutions to amending the Act, which include:
 - continuing general education about safety around dogs;
 - consistent and effective application of existing rules; and
 - the need for dog owners' individual responsibility and accountability.
- The Council has also suggested the legislation be amended to prohibit completely the ownership of 'menacing' dogs, and the mandatory destruction of any dog that may be classified as 'dangerous'.

Masterton District Council

- The Council did not suggest any improvements to the Act. However, the Council uses some innovative ways to increase dog microchipping and registration. At Te Awhina House, in a low-decile area of Masterton, the Council recently held a sausage sizzle and offered to microchip dogs for a koha of \$5. At the sausage sizzle the Council also took paperwork to process payment by instalment of registration fees, and provided pamphlets on requirements for good dog ownership. In addition to initiatives like the sausage sizzle event, the Council goes to people's houses to microchip dogs.

Ruapehu District Council

- In general, the Council finds the Act fit for purpose. However, it has suggested that changes be made to remove territorial authority discretion around the desexing of menacing dogs, and include a requirement that all menacing dogs must be neutered. It also recommended that under section 25 of the Act, the maximum length of time someone can be disqualified from owning dogs be increased, from five years to ten years.
- The Council has also suggested widening the scope of schedule 4 of the Act, to encompass all mastiff and bull terrier types, along with any dogs which have been historically bred for fighting; the baiting of other animals; or for attack purposes.
- One further recommendation the Council has made is that a person who is disqualified from owning dogs, should not be allowed to live at a property with dogs owned by other parties.
- The Council has introduced several initiatives, including discounts in registration costs, to incentivise: the prompt payment of fees; neutering; good dog ownership; microchipping; and the supply of a digital photograph. The digital photograph is a new initiative and helps reduce the amount of dogs being registered as an incorrect breed (a common example is an American Pit Bull Terrier being registered as a Labrador cross).

Upper Hutt City Council

- The Council finds that the provisions in the Act are generally workable. However, it feels that local policies and bylaws result in significant variation in practice across the country. The Council considers that amendments should aim to achieve national consistency. The Council also suggests that all dogs classified as menacing should be required to be desexed, and a standardised assessment criteria to establish a menacing dog be developed at a national level, to avoid local inconsistencies in breed identification.
- The Council also feels that section 25 of the Act is ineffective, as a disqualified owner can simply register a dog under their partner's/friend's/family member's name in the same household.

Hutt City Council

- Les Dalton, President of the NZIAM, provided recommendations on behalf of NZIAM. However, Hutt City Council shares these views.
- The NZIAM recommends mandatory notification of all dog bite incidents reported through the medical profession to territorial authorities. This is because approximately 85 per cent of dog bites reported to the Accident Compensation Corporation are not reported to the relevant territorial authority, with many of these incidents occurring in the family home. The reporting will allow the territorial authority to investigate and apply appropriate actions to educate dog owners on their responsibilities; and prevent further attacks.
- It also recommends mandatory training of all animal control officers, along with national audit programmes of territorial authority animal management operations. This is due to perceived inconsistent training standards throughout the country. Training would ensure consistent application of the Act, with clear messages to communities generally about best practice in terms of responsible dog ownership. An audit programme would provide for checks and measures of compliance, along with consequences for non-compliance, to ensure that dog control operations are nationally consistent and of a higher standard than at present.
- The NZIAM has suggested the following amendments to the Act:
 - include the ability to apply an infringement notice to an owner of any dog, for biting or rushing at a person;
 - remove the words "public place" in section 57A of the Act, to expand the offence of rushing incidents to include private property;
 - include a mandatory probationary classification for any person who commits any offence under section 57 (dog attacks) and 57A (rushing) of the Act;
 - mandatory desexing of all dogs classified as menacing;
 - mandatory desexing of all dogs classified as menacing or dangerous, prior to being released from an animal shelter; and
 - prohibit the adoption of any dog listed in schedule 4 of the Act, from any animal shelter or welfare agency.
- It also suggests that dog safety awareness programmes in schools be made compulsory and part of the national education curriculum.

RNZSPCA SUBMISSION

BY THE

**Royal New Zealand Society for the
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Inc.**

ON THE

**The New Zealand Government's
survey: 'Reducing dog attacks -
share your thoughts'**

Public Draft August 2016

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Introduction

The following submission is made on behalf of The Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (The SPCA).

The SPCA is the preeminent animal welfare and advocacy organisation in New Zealand. We have been in existence for over 140 years with a supporter base representing many tens of thousands of New Zealanders across the nation.

The organisation includes 45 Animal Welfare Centres across New Zealand and the National Inspectorate whose inspectors enforce the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

Please note that we refer to 'dog bite incidents' rather than 'attacks' as the government does in the survey. This is because the term 'dog attack' is a provocative term which implies that the dog is purposely and maliciously attacking a person when in reality many dogs bite only when severely provoked by inappropriate human behaviour. Therefore, we believe that 'dog bite incident' is a more accurate and fair term to use than 'dog attack'.

Position Statement

SPCA NZ strongly believes that **there is no 'single biggest contributing factor' to dog bite incidents**. ALL dogs have the potential to bite and Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) is not effective in reducing dog bites.

SPCA NZ believes that the most important ways to reduce dog bite incidents include:

- Encouraging and facilitating responsible dog ownership (including properly containing, identifying, registering, desexing, and providing appropriate and adequate socialisation and training of dogs).
- Educating dog owners and non-dog owners of all ages about dog behaviour, and how to properly read dogs' body language, approach and react to dogs. Education of children about how to safely interact with dogs and prevent bite

incidents is particularly important since the majority of dog bite victims are children under 15 years of age.

- Avoiding/repealing Breed Specific Legislation (BSL). BSL has not been shown to reduce public risk and is likely to create even more risk of harm from dogs, due to the incorrect belief that dogs other than those that have been banned are 'safe'.
- Undertaking more research to better understand why dogs bite (and consequently how bites can be better avoided) and disseminating the results effectively to all stakeholders.

Submission

SPCA NZ welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on reducing dog bite incidents; our submission will address each section and question from the Government's survey.

1 Section 2: Why do you think dogs attack?

1.1 Question 1

The first question in section 2 asks 'What do you think is the biggest contributing factor to a dog attack?' and then gives the following options to choose from:

- *Dog breed*
- *Dog size*
- *Dog owner*
- *Council animal control*
- *Dog control law*
- *Education about dog behaviour*

- *Police enforcement of dog control law*
- *Parents not keeping children safe*

Based on the available evidence SPCA NZ strongly believes that **there is no ‘single biggest contributing factor’ to dog bite incidents**. ALL dogs have the potential to bite. Many studies have shown that the tendency of a dog to bite is multifactorial and associated with at least five interacting factors: the individual dog’s genetic makeup; socialisation; training experiences (especially during sensitive periods of development); physical and psychological health; and the context of the incident including the behaviour of the victim and dog handler (Matos et al., 2015; Overall, 2013; Overall & Love, 2001; Shuler et al., 2008). The degree to which any one factor influences the behaviour of a dog varies according to the unique characteristics associated with each incident.

However, for this question it is necessary to choose one answer and we choose ‘dog owner’. From all the options provided we think that this is the biggest contributing factor to dog bite incidents (although each dog bite situation will always be more complex and have more than just one contributing factor).

Owners should identify and manage situations that have the potential to pose a bite risk, which is part of being a responsible pet owner. This includes having their dogs desexed, properly socialising and training dogs using only positive training methods, supervising interactions between children and dogs, not routinely chaining dogs (as chained dogs are more likely to bite than unchained dogs (Gershman et al., 1994)) and early identification and treatment of injury or illness (as dogs that are in pain are more likely to bite; Overall & Love, 2001).

Despite dog bite incidents being multifactorial, ultimately it is a dog owner’s responsibility to safely control their dog. The evidence shows that the behaviour of dog owners often contributes to dog bite incidents because dogs who are not properly socialised, trained or contained are frequently involved in these incidents (Gershman et al., 1994; Overall & Love, 2001; Shuler et al., 2008) and some dog owners have a preference for dogs that are perceived to be aggressive (Wells & Hepper, 2012). It is

of equal importance that dog owners and non-dog owners are educated about dog behaviour and body language, and appropriate ways to interact with dogs to prevent bite incidents (Lakestani et al., 2014; Reisner & Shofer, 2008; Spiegel, 2000; Wan et al., 2012).

Previous analyses of bite statistics by breed type are likely inaccurate, due to inherent problems associated with reliance on visual identification of the dog breed. Multiple studies have now shown that accurate and reliable visual identification of the predominant breed in mixed breed dogs **is not possible** (Hoffman et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2015; Voith et al., 2009).

The reasons we did not choose the following options as the biggest contributing factor to a dog bite incident are:

- Dog breed
 - We do not think that a dog's breed is the biggest contributing factor to a dog bite incident. Scientific studies have shown that breed alone is not an effective indicator or predictor of aggression in dogs (Casey et al., 2014; Collier, 2006; Schalke, et al., 2008). ALL dogs have the potential to bite.
- Dog size
 - We do not think that a dog's size is the biggest contributing factor to a dog bite incident. However, some studies have shown that smaller breeds are more likely to display human directed aggression than larger breeds (Duffy et al., 2008; McGreevy et al., 2013). This may be because aggression is more likely to be tolerated from smaller breeds, and so this trait is not selected against when breeding small dogs.
- Council animal control
 - We do not think that council animal control is the biggest contributing factor to a dog bite incident. However, council animal control could do

more to reduce the occurrence of dog bite incidents. For further information about this, see our responses in section 4.

- Dog control law
 - We do not think that the dog control law is the biggest contributing factor to a dog bite incident. However, we believe that New Zealand's Dog Control Law could be improved to increase its effectiveness in reducing the risk of dog bite incidents. In particular it needs to be **responsive to aggressive dog behaviour, not the breed or type of the dog**. For further information about this, see our responses in section 5.

- Education about dog behaviour
 - Lack of knowledge about dog behaviour is certainly one of the biggest contributing factors to dog bite incidents. Education in how to properly read dogs' body language and how to appropriately approach and react to dogs is important for all members of the public, whether they own dogs or not. The majority of dog bites incidents involve children under the age of 15, so education of children about how to safely interact with dogs and prevent bite incidents is vital (Jalongo, 2008; Lakestani et al., 2014; Overall & Love, 2001; Reisner & Shofer, 2008; Spiegel, 2000).

- Police enforcement of dog control law
 - We do not think that lack of police enforcement of the dog control law is the biggest contributing factor to a dog bite incident.
 - We believe that New Zealand's Dog Control Law could be improved to increase its effectiveness in reducing the risk of dog bite incidents. In particular it needs to be **responsive to aggressive dog behaviour, not the breed or type of the dog**. Focusing on breed types is ineffective and wastes time. ALL dogs have the potential to bite. Other aspects of the law that seek to ensure the proper registration of all dogs (and consequently promote responsible dog ownership, such as

desexing, proper training, socialisation and containment) should be more consistently and effectively enforced.

- Parents not keeping children safe
 - Although we do not believe that parents not keeping children safe is the biggest contributing factor to dog bite incidents, we recognise that this is a significant factor in **some** dog bite incidents (Reisner & Shofer, 2008). Parents do need to be aware of the risks of children interacting with dogs, especially when their contact is not wanted by the dog or is inappropriate. Parents need to be educated in dog behaviour and should always appropriately supervise interactions with animals. Education of children about how to safely interact with dogs and prevent bite incidents is vital (Jalongo, 2008; Overall & Love, 2001; Reisner & Shofer, 2008; Spiegel, 2000).

1.2 Question 2

The second question in section 2 asks 'What do you think is the best way to reduce dog attacks? (select all that apply)' and then gives the following options to choose from:

- *Ban certain dog breeds*
- *Require owners to complete dog obedience classes*
- *Give councils more powers*
- *Education about dog behaviour*
- *Other*

The SPCA NZ does NOT believe that the following are reasonable and effective ways to reduce dog bite incidents:

- Ban certain dog breeds
 - We strongly believe that banning certain dog breeds is NOT a good way to reduce dog bite incidents. The evidence shows that Breed Specific Legislation (BSL), which involves targeting and banning certain dog breeds, is not effective (Clarke & Fraser, 2013; Collier, 2006; Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Hallsworth, 2011; Patronek et al., 2010; Schalke et al., 2008; Súilleabháin, 2015). Wherever BSL has been implemented, it has not been shown to reduce public risk and is likely to create even more risk of harm from dogs, due to the incorrect belief that dogs other than those that have been banned are 'safe'. In fact, BSL is now being reviewed in many countries worldwide and has been reversed by three European governments and many US administrations (RSPCA UK, 2016).
 - Scientific studies have shown that breed alone is not an effective indicator or predictor of aggression in dogs (et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is not possible to accurately classify the predominant breed in mixed breed dogs of the types usually targeted by BSL using either visual or DNA identification (Hoffman et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2015; Schalke et al., 2008; Voith et al., 2009)
 - BSL disregards the potential negative influence of dog owners (Matos et al., 2015; Overall & Love, 2001; Wells & Hepper, 2012). Inappropriate owners who want an aggressive dog can encourage that behaviour in many dog types, whether those dogs are banned or not. Negative deeds of some owners and dogs should be managed and legislated against. A generalised blanket ban against certain breeds does nothing to impact the occurrence of dog bites.

- Give councils more powers
 - Councils could do more to reduce the incidence of dog bites simply by using their current powers more effectively and promptly. For further information, see our responses in section 4.

SPCA NZ **AGREES** that the following are all ways to reduce dog bite incidents:

- Require owners to complete dog obedience classes
 - We do think that this is a good way to reduce dog bite incidents, as long as the training is evidence based and utilises positive methods. Studies have shown that the use of negative training methods is associated with an increased risk of behaviour problems in dogs, including aggression (Arhant et al., 2010; Blackwell et al., 2008; Blackwell et al., 2012; Herron et al., 2009; Hiby et al., 2004; Hsu & Sun, 2010; Schalke et al., 2007).
- Education about dog behaviour
 - We do think that education about dog behaviour is a good way to reduce dog bite incidents.
 - Well-designed education programmes about dog behaviour for people of all ages, regardless of whether they are dog owners themselves or not, are desperately needed to reduce the incidence of dog bites.
 - Studies show that educating children and parents about appropriate behaviour around dogs are likely to reduce the occurrence of dog bites (Chapman et al., 2000; Jalongo, 2008; Lakestani et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2003, RSPCA UK, 2016).
- Other

SPCA NZ also suggests that the following factors would reduce dog bite incidents:

- Education programmes about how to training dogs effectively
 - A comprehensive education programme that uses appropriate and positive training methods is needed. Negative training methods are associated with an increased risk of behavioural problems in dogs, including aggression (Arhant et al., 2010; Blackwell et al., 2008; Hiby et al., 2004; Hsu & Sun, 2010). There should be a centrally maintained list of reputable dog trainers who use positive training methods.

- Remove breed specific legislation (BSL)
 - The breed specific part of current dog control legislation should be repealed so that there can be a greater focus on the adequate and proper of enforcement of effective dog control laws. ALL dogs have the potential to bite. BSL is now being reviewed in many countries worldwide and has already been reversed by three European governments and many US administrations (RSPCA UK, 2016).

- It is important that more research is undertaken to better understand why dogs bite (and consequently how bites can be better avoided) and the results disseminated effectively to all stakeholders.

- Proper funding of effective regulations
 - Effective regulations must be properly funded and should provide incentives for responsible dog owners, whilst ensuring there are adequate penalties and enforcement if dog owners act irresponsibly.

- Initiatives that have been successful at reducing dog bite incidents in other countries

- Successful initiatives in other countries include a combination of incentives and penalties.
- Examples include:
 - Calgary, Canada, successfully reduced dog bite incidents by investing in education for dog owners and children, and increasing penalties for owners in breach of registration regulations and owners of dogs that have bitten.
 - Oregon, USA, also implemented a model that reduced repeat biting incidents. This focused on the early identification of potentially dangerous dogs by implementing a “potentially dangerous dog” classification system based on based on inappropriate but non-injurious behaviour, and not on the breed of dog.

1.3 Question 3

The third question in section 2 asks ‘Do you have any further suggestions to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks?’.

SPCA NZ’s suggestions of other ways to help reduce the risk and harm of dog bite incidents are:

- Licencing dog owners
 - This approach allows for the targeted education and training of dog owners about dog bite prevention and responsible dog ownership.
 - Owner licencing incorporating appropriate owner education and dog training would provide support for responsible dog owners.

- Owner licencing incorporating appropriate penalties would allow an enforcement framework for non-compliant dog owners.
- A requirement that all people who want to breed dogs must obtain a licence
 - All people who want to breed dogs should have to obtain a licence and adhere to guidelines which require responsible breeding practices (these should include selection of appropriate and non-aggressive dogs for breeding, provision adequate and appropriate care and facilities to protect the physical and behavioural wellbeing of the dogs/puppies, including adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies and their parents).
 - This would provide the opportunity to control the serial ownership, breeding and dispersal of dogs that have the characteristics and experiences associated with an increased risk of biting (i.e. a combination of genetics, poor physical and/or psychological environment, socialisation and training experiences).
 - The regulation of breeder licencing along with breeder guidelines and standards could be utilised to reduce aggression in dogs through selection of less aggressive dogs for breeding and adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies and their parents.
 - Breeder licencing and enforcement also has the potential to reduce the number of unwanted animals and consequently the number of free-roaming dogs.
 - This approach also allows for the targeted education and training of breeders about dog bite prevention and responsible dog ownership.

- A requirement that all dogs and puppies are desexed prior to sale or transfer of ownership
 - Councils should require all establishments that sell/rehome animals to require all dogs/puppies to be desexed prior to sale unless to a person who has a breeder licence. Entire dogs are more likely to bite than desexed dogs (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Matos et al., 2015; Overall & Love, 2001).
 - Fewer entire dogs in the community may help to reduce the number of dog bite incidents.
- A requirement that all dogs and puppies are desexed prior to release back to their owner if they have been impounded by animal control
 - All dogs and puppies impounded by animal control should be required to be desexed prior to release back to their owner (unless their owner has a breeder licence). Entire dogs are more likely to bite than de-sexed dogs (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Matos et al., 2015; Overall & Love, 2001).
 - Fewer entire dogs in the community may help to reduce the number of dog bite incidents.
- A requirement that all dogs and puppies receive appropriate and adequate socialisation
 - All establishments that sell/rehome animals should be required to provide adequate and age-appropriate socialisation for dogs/puppies. During sensitive periods of development are associated with increased risk of behavioural problems, including aggression (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007; Kutsumi et al., 2013; McMillan et al., 2011; Scott & Fuller, 1965; Seksel et al., 1999; Tiira & Lohi, 2015).

- Licencing of all establishments that sell or rehome dogs and puppies
 - All establishments that sell or rehome dogs and puppies should be licenced with a requirement to desex dogs/puppies prior to sale and provide appropriate socialisation to meet the age appropriate behavioural and physical needs of the animal.

- Provision of adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies
 - This is vitally important, especially during the sensitive period of 3 -12 weeks of age. Safe and positive experiences during this critical period reduce the incidence of behavioural problems, including aggression (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007; Kutsumi et al., 2013; McMillan et al., 2011; Scott & Fuller, 1965; Seksel et al., 1999; Tiira & Lohi, 2015).
 - Providing adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies is the joint responsibility of breeders and owners.

- Undertake more research to better understand why dogs bite (and consequently how bites can be better avoided) and disseminate the results effectively to all stakeholders.

2 Section 3: What can owners do?

2.1 Question 1

The question asks 'How do you think dog owners can help to reduce attacks? (select all that apply)?' and then gives the following options to choose from:

- *Keep dogs on leash when in public*
- *Owners and dogs must take obedience training*
- *Be more considerate of other people and dogs in public*
- *Properly fencing off property*
- *Other*

SPCA NZ does NOT believe that a requirement to muzzle all dogs when in public is an effective or reasonable way for owners to reduce dog bite incidents. A blanket requirement to muzzle all dogs in public is an unreasonable and unnecessary imposition on responsible dog owners, and could represent a significant compromise to the wellbeing of dogs by restricting their ability to play and interact with other dogs and humans. However, we do support the use of basket muzzles if a dog has displayed aggression or poses a degree of risk.

The SPCA NZ AGREES that all of the following are ways that owners can reduce dog bite incidents:

- Keep dogs on a leash when in public
 - Having a dog on a lead reduces the risk of uncontrolled and/or inappropriate interactions with people and other animals and, consequently, reduces the risk of dog bite incidents. However, it is worth noting that only a small proportion of dog bites occur when dogs are loose in public places (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Overall & Love, 2001).
- Owners and dogs must take obedience training
 - Dog training that uses positive methods is associated with a decreased incidence of behavioural problems in dogs (Arhant et al., 2010; Blackwell et al., 2008; Herron et al., 2009; Hiby et al., 2004; Hsu & Sun, 2010; Matos et al., 2015). Therefore, appropriate training for dogs and owners that is evidence based and utilises positive methods could significantly help to reduce dog bite incidents and is recommended as part of responsible pet ownership.
 - Care must be taken in selecting the appropriate training technique as studies have shown that the use of training using negative methods are associated with increased risk of behavioural problems in dogs,

including aggression (Arhant et al. 2010; Blackwell et al. 2008; Heron et al. 2009; Hiby et al. 2004; Hsu & Sun 2010).

- Please note that obedience training will not necessarily educate people about dog behaviour. However, education about dog behaviour, how to properly read dogs' body language and how to appropriately approach and react to dogs is extremely important for all members of the public, of all ages, but particularly for children (Chapman et al., 2000; Jalongo, 2008; Lakestani et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2003). In addition, it is important that people are educated about the need to appropriately socialise, train and exercise their dogs to help reduce behavioural problems, including aggression.
- Be more considerate of other people and dogs in public
 - Dog owners being more considerate of other people and dogs whilst in public, along with steps taken to educate all members of the public about dog behaviour and body language (regardless of whether they are dog owners themselves), would reduce the risk of uncontrolled and/or inappropriate interactions and consequently help to reduce dog bite incidents.
- Properly fencing off property
 - Dog owners properly fencing off their properties is likely to decrease the incidence of dog bites. Studies show that between 13% and 25% of dog bites occur when a dog is 'at large' (Overall & Love, 2001), so steps should be taken to ensure that dogs are not permitted to roam alone. Similarly, dogs should not be routinely chained/tethered at properties as chained dogs are more likely to bite than unchained dogs (Gershman et al., 1994).

- Other

SPCA NZ makes the following suggestions regarding how dog owners can help reduce the risk dog bite incidents:

- Dog owners who want to breed their dogs should have to obtain a licence
 - This licence would require that they adhere to guidelines which require responsible breeding practices (these should include selection of appropriate and non-aggressive dogs for breeding, provision adequate and appropriate care and facilities to protect the physical and behavioural wellbeing of the dogs/puppies, including adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies and their parents).
 - Breeder guidelines and standards could be utilised to reduce aggression in dogs through selection of less aggressive dogs for breeding and adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies and their parents (King et al., 2012).
- Dog owners should provide adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies
 - This is vitally important, especially during the sensitive period of 3 -12 weeks of age. Safe and positive experiences during this critical period reduce the incidence of behavioural problems, including aggression (Kutsumi et al., 2013; McMillan et al., 2011; Scott & Fuller, 1965; Seksel et al., 1999; Tiira & Lohi, 2015).
 - Providing adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies is the joint responsibility of breeders and owners.
- Dog owners should ensure that they obtain their dog/puppy from a reputable source

- This source should evaluate the behavioural appropriateness of the parents and/or dog and provide age-appropriate early socialisation and environmental needs for the dog/puppy.
- Owners should improve their knowledge and understanding of dog behaviour
 - Education in how to properly read dogs' body language and how to appropriately approach and react to dogs is important for all members of the public, whether they own dogs or not. The majority of dog bite incidents involve children under the age of 15 so education of children about how to safely interact with dogs and prevent bite incidents is vital (Chapman et al., 2000; Jalongo, 2008; Lakestani et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2003; RSPCA UK, 2016).
 - Appropriate socialisation, training and exercise are important to reduce behavioural problems, including aggression (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007; Kutsumi et al., 2013; McMillan et al., 2011; Scott & Fuller, 1965; Seksel et al., 1999; Tiira & Lohi, 2015).
- Dog owners should seek early support from a reputable professional for behavioural problems, particularly aggression
 - Dogs implicated in serious bite incidents are more likely to have previously exhibited behavioural problems (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007). If these problems were addressed early by a professional (using appropriate training methods) then subsequent dog bite incidents would be less likely to occur.
- Dog owners should identify and manage situations that have the potential to pose a bite risk
This includes:
 - Supervising interactions between children and dogs.

- Not routinely chaining dogs (chained dogs are more likely to bite than unchained dogs; Gershman et al., 1994).
- Early identification and treatment of injury or illness (dogs that are in pain are more likely to bite; Overall & Love, 2001).

3 Section 4: What can local councils do?

3.1 Question 1

The question asks 'How do you think councils can help to reduce dog attacks? (select all that apply)' and then gives the following options to choose from:

- *Establishing more spaces for exercising dogs*
- *Patrolling the streets*
- *Quicker responses to complaints*
- *Punishing irresponsible dog owners*
- *Other*

SPCA NZ AGREES that the following are ways that local councils can help to reduce dog bite incidents:

- Establishing more spaces for exercising dogs
 - If dog owners have easy access to a variety of safe areas to exercise their dogs it would allow dogs the ability to express their normal behaviour, socialise with people and dogs, release energy etc, and therefore reduce potential frustration and unsociable behaviour which can lead to aggression (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007).
 - In addition, establishing more spaces for exercising dogs could help to reduce the number of dogs being exercised on the streets. This would

help to reduce the likelihood of uncontrolled and/or inappropriate interactions with children, adults and other animals which may pose a bite incident risk.

- Patrolling the streets
 - A quick response to complaints of dogs at large or behaving dangerously in public, and the immediate removal of roaming dogs, could help to prevent bite incidents.
 - In addition, penalties for owners of dogs found roaming should be increased and better enforced to act as a deterrent.
- Quicker responses to complaints
 - A quick response to complaints of dogs at large or behaving dangerously, and the immediate removal of roaming dogs, could help to prevent bite incidents.
 - Responding to complaints of dogs behaving dangerously BEFORE they have bitten provides an opportunity for education, training and bite prevention.
 - In addition, penalties for owners of dogs found roaming should be increased and better enforced to act as a deterrent.
- Punishing irresponsible dog owners
 - Stricter penalties for owners in breach of registration regulations, or those who do not properly contain, restrain or control their dogs, and owners of dogs that have bitten could help to reduce the risk of dog bite incidents.

- Such measures are only effective if properly and consistently enforced to provide an adequate disincentive to irresponsible and dangerous dog ownership behaviours.

- Other

SPCA NZ suggests that the following are ways that local councils can help to reduce the risk dog bite incidents:

- Repeal current breed specific legislation
 - Current breed specific legislation should be repealed to allow a greater focus on adequate and proper of enforcement of dog control laws.
- Adequately fund enforcement of effective regulations and provision of public education
 - Adequate funding is needed to enforce effective regulations and provide public education, especially for children. The majority of reported dog bite incidents involve children under the age of 15, so education of children about how to safely interact with dogs and prevent dog bites is of vital importance (Chapman et al., 2000; Jalongo, 2008; Lakestani et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2003, RSPCA UK 2016).
- Fund research to better understand why dogs bite
 - It is important that more research is undertaken to better understand why dogs bite (and consequently how bites can be better avoided) and the results disseminated effectively to all stakeholders.
- Inspect dog owner's properties
 - Councils should inspect the properties of all dog owners (when an owner initially registers their dog and also if they change their

address). This would allow early identification of dog ownership issues posing a potential risk for dog bite incidents (e.g. chaining dogs or inadequate fencing).

- This also provides opportunities for owner education about dog bite prevention.
- Consistently investigate, categorise, record and deal with dog bite incidents
 - There should be a consistent approach in how dog bite incidents are investigated, categorised, recorded and dealt with **according to the dog bite incident's severity and circumstances.**
 - SPCA NZ encourages people to report ALL dog bites to the central dog bite repository, so a full understanding of the extent of the dog bite problem and a better picture of the percentage of dog bites according to the grading system (1-5) can be obtained.
 - The majority of dog bites are not currently reported to anyone, it is estimated that over 50% of all dog bites are not reported (Overall & Love, 2001).
 - At the moment, the only data available is from people who are hospitalised or who require an Accident Compensation Corporation claim (likely only grades 3-5).
 - Although ALL dogs have the potential to bite, not all dogs are equally able to cause the same level of harm during a dog bite incident.

- Provide incentives and support for responsible dog ownership
 - Councils should provide incentives and support for responsible dog ownership, to balance the necessary penalties for dog owners who do not comply with responsible dog owner requirements.
 - This approach also provides an opportunity for local councils to enhance their public image in relation to dog control.
 - These incentives and support could include providing subsidised puppy and/or dog training courses as part of new owner education and responsible dog ownership programmes.
- Require that all dogs and puppies are desexed prior to sale or transfer of ownership
 - Councils should require all establishments that sell/rehome animals to require all dogs/puppies to be desexed prior to sale unless to a person who has a breeder licence.
 - Entire dogs are more likely to bite than de-sexed dogs (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Matos et al., 2015; Overall & Love, 2001). Fewer entire dogs in the community may help to reduce the number of dog bite incidents.
- Require that all dogs and puppies are desexed prior to release back to their owner if they have been impounded by council animal control
 - Councils should require that all dogs and puppies are desexed prior to release back to their owner if they have been impounded by council animal control unless to a person who has a breeder licence. Entire dogs are more likely to bite than de-sexed dogs (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Matos et al., 2015; Overall & Love, 2001).

- Fewer entire dogs in the community may help to reduce the number of dog bite incidents.
- Require that all dogs and puppies receive appropriate and adequate socialisation
 - Councils should require all establishments that sell/rehome animals to provide adequate and age-appropriate socialisation for dogs/puppies. Deficits in socialisation during sensitive periods of development are associated with increased risk of behavioural problems, including aggression (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007; Kutsumi et al., 2013; McMillan et al., 2011; Scott & Fuller, 1965; Seksel et al., 1999; Tiira & Lohi, 2015).

4 Section 5: What can central Government do?

4.1 Question 1

The question states 'I think the Government can help to reduce attacks by: (select all that apply)' and then gives the following options to choose from:

- *Increasing public awareness about safety around dogs*
- *Banning certain dog breeds*
- *Give councils more powers*
- *Requiring the police do more to enforce dog control law*
- *Requiring dog owner licencing*
- *Other*

SPCA NZ does NOT believe that the following are ways central Government can help to reduce dog bite incidents:

- Banning certain dog breeds
 - We strongly believe that that banning certain dog breeds is NOT the best way to reduce dog bite incidents. The evidence shows that Breed Specific Legislation (BSL), which involves targeting and banning certain dog breeds, is not effective (Clarke & Fraser, 2013; Collier, 2006; Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Hallsworth, 2011; Patronek et al., 2010; Schalke et al., 2008; Súilleabháin, 2015). Wherever BSL has been implemented, it has not been shown to reduce public risk and is likely to create even more risk of harm from dogs, due to the incorrect belief that dogs other than those that have been banned are 'safe'. In fact, BSL is now being reviewed in many countries worldwide and has already been reversed by three European governments and many US administrations (RSPCA UK, 2016).
 - Scientific studies have shown that breed alone is not an effective indicator or predictor of aggression in dogs (Casey et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is not possible to accurately classify the predominant breed in mixed breed dogs of the types usually targeted by BSL using either visual or DNA identification (Hoffman et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2015; Schalke et al., 2008; Voith et al., 2009)
 - BSL disregards the potential negative influence of dog owners (Matos et al., 2015; Overall & Love, 2001; Wells & Hepper, 2012). Inappropriate owners who want an aggressive dog can encourage that behaviour in many dog types, whether those dogs are banned or not. Negative deeds of some owners and dogs should be managed and legislated against. A generalised blanket ban against certain breeds does nothing to impact the occurrence of dog bites.

- Give councils more powers
 - Councils could do more to reduce the incidence of dog bites just by using their current powers more effectively and promptly. For further information see our responses in section 4

SPCA NZ AGREES that all of the following are ways that central Government can help to reduce dog bite incidents:

- Increasing public awareness about safety around dogs
 - Educating all members of the public (whether they are dog owners or not) about dog behaviour, body language and appropriate ways to interact with dogs to prevent bite incidents is of vital importance in reducing the risk of dog bite incidents.
 - Of particular importance is educating parents and children about safely approaching, and interacting with dogs. The majority of reported dog bite incidents involve children under the age of 15, so education of children about how to safely interact with dogs and prevent dog bites is vital (Chapman et al., 2000; Jalongo, 2008; Lakestani et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2003, RSPCA UK, 2016).
- Requiring the police do more to enforce dog control law
 - Aspects of the dog control law should be more consistently and effectively enforced.
 - It is important to act promptly and effectively when dogs are roaming or behaving aggressively, when dogs might pose an increased risk of biting and when owners are in breach of dog control regulations (e.g. not taking reasonable steps to ensure that the dog does not injure, endanger, intimidate, or cause distress to people or other animals).

- As previously stated, SPCA NZ does not agree with the breed specific aspect of the dog control law and so does not feel that this should remain or be more strictly enforced.
- Requiring dog owner licencing
 - Licencing the owner instead of the dog correctly places the emphasis on the human responsible for the dog's behaviour and encourages responsible dog ownership.
- Other

SPCA NZ's suggestions on how central Government can help to reduce dog bite incidents are:

- National education programme
 - Implement a coordinated national, evidence-based education programme for all members of the public, especially children, about dog behaviour, bite prevention and responsible dog ownership.
- Ensure consistency of prevention and responsible dog ownership messages
 - Central Government should work with local councils to ensure that consistent dog bite prevention and responsible dog ownership messages are disseminated by all councils.
- National dog bite incident database
 - Central Government should implement a national dog bite incident database, with mandatory reporting. The dog's details would have to be recorded in a descriptive and comprehensive manner as multiple studies have shown that visual identification through breed type alone is inaccurate.

- Remove breed specific legislation (BSL)
 - BSL has never been shown to be effective, is not supported by current scientific evidence and diverts resources away from effective strategies such as education, training, desexing campaigns and registration/responsible dog ownership enforcement.
 - BSL does not reduce public risk and is likely to create even more risk of harm from dogs, due to the incorrect belief that dogs other than those that have been banned are 'safe'. ALL dogs have the potential to bite.
 - BSL is now being reviewed in many countries worldwide and has already been reversed by three European governments and many US administrations (RSPCA UK 2016).
- Require all people who want to breed dogs to obtain a licence
 - Central Government should implement a regulatory framework requiring all people who want to breed dogs to obtain a licence and adhere to guidelines which require responsible breeding practices (these should include selection of appropriate and non-aggressive dogs for breeding, provision adequate and appropriate care and facilities to protect the physical and behavioural wellbeing of the dogs/puppies, including adequate and appropriate socialisation of puppies and their parents).
- Require that all dogs and puppies are desexed prior to sale or transfer of ownership
 - Councils should require all establishments that sell/rehome animals to require all dogs/puppies to be desexed prior to sale unless to a person who has a breeder licence.

- Entire dogs are more likely to bite than de-sexed dogs (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Matos et al., 2015; Overall & Love, 2001). Fewer entire dogs in the community may help to reduce the number of dog bite incidents.
- Require that all dogs and puppies are desexed prior to release back to their owner if they have been impounded by animal control
 - Government should require that all dogs and puppies are desexed prior to release back to their owner if they have been impounded by animal control unless to a person who has a breeder licence.
 - Entire dogs are more likely to bite than de-sexed dogs (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010; Matos et al., 2015; Overall & Love, 2001). Fewer entire dogs in the community may help to reduce the number of dog bite incidents.
- Require that all dogs and puppies receive appropriate and adequate socialisation
 - Central Government should require all establishments that sell/rehome animals to provide adequate and age-appropriate socialisation for dogs/puppies. Deficits in socialisation during sensitive periods of development are associated with increased risk of behavioural problems, including aggression (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007; Kutsumi et al., 2013; McMillan et al., 2011; Scott & Fuller, 1965; Seksel et al., 1999; Tiira & Lohi, 2015).

5 Conclusions

SPCA NZ's key points in regards to reducing the risk of dog bite incidents are:

1. Any dog has the potential to bite.
2. Responsible dog ownership (including properly containing, identifying, registering, desexing, and providing appropriate and adequate socialisation and training for your dog) is key to reducing the risk of dog bites.
3. Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) does not reduce dog bites. The evidence shows that BSL, which involves targeting and banning certain dog breeds, is not effective. Wherever BSL has been implemented, it has not been shown to reduce public risk and is likely to create even more risk of harm from dogs, due to the incorrect belief that dogs other than those that have been banned are 'safe'.
4. Education about dog behaviour, and how to properly read dogs' body language, approach and react to dogs is important for all members of the public of all ages, whether they own dogs or not. The majority of dog bite incidents involve children under the age of 15 so education of children about how to safely interact with dogs and prevent bite incidents is particularly important.

The SPCA would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues in this document further with you at any stage.

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