

DO PIT BULLS INFLICT INJURIES UNLIKE OTHER BREEDS OF DOGS?

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A National Canine Research Council Perspective Report

Graphic depiction of fatal injuries that dogs have inflicted on their few unfortunate victims is a topic that NCRC has been hesitant to address. Fatal dog attacks are vanishingly rare occurrences; a person is five times more likely to be struck and killed by lightning than to be killed by a dog. There seemed no useful purpose in addressing the nature and type of injuries a victim sustained during such a rare event, nor would we ever wish to compromise the privacy of victims or sensationalize their tragedies.

Unfortunately, certain groups and individuals seek to capitalize on the already disproportionate dread that some people feel toward dogs. They persist in making false claims about the severity and nature of pit bull attacks versus those of other breeds/types of dogs. They expose the victims' identities and traffic in descriptions of the victims' injuries in order to forward their personal theories and agenda.

Claims about the "unique damage that pit bulls inflict" are made by individuals or special interest groups with no knowledge or experience in analyzing fatal dog bite injuries. In the interest of accuracy and fairness, the NCRC feels compelled to address these tactics and claims.

For nearly two decades, the NCRC has investigated and analyzed injuries from every fatal dog attack for which data is available and has found that no breed of dog has a particular method of attack or inflicts an exclusive type of injury; claims that one breed of dog inflicts injuries unlike other breeds have no merit.

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Below is a list of 15 victims of dog attacks (*table 1*), along with descriptions of the fatal wounds listed on the autopsy reports. Each victim was attacked and killed by a single dog. There are 15 different breeds represented in these incidentsⁱ (*table 2*).

Not only is it impossible to match the incidents listed in table 1 with the breeds of dogs listed in table 2, it is impossible to determine which breed of dog is responsible for *any* injury based solely upon examination of injuries, autopsy reports or photos.

Table 1, fatal wound descriptions

Victim 1: Multiple penetrating wounds to the abdomen
Victim 2: Collapsed lungs, multiple wounds to the chest, partial devourment
Victim 3: Massive head and neck injuries
Victim 4: Multiple bite wounds, dismemberment
Victim 5: Extensive scalp and neck injuries
Victim 6: Multiple lacerations of scalp and neck, depressed skull fracture
Victim 7: Exsanguination from multiple bite wounds
Victim 8: Skull fracture and severe bites to upper back and face
Victim 9: Multiple penetrating wounds to back and chest
Victim 10: Severe bite wounds to the head
Victim 11: Severe bites, massive bleeding, broken facial & neck bones
Victim 12: Massive head injuries
Victim 13: Severe, multiple penetrating injuries to head and neck
Victim 14: Massive bite injuries to lower extremities, dismemberment
Victim 15: Severe scalp, facial wounds, laceration of jugular

Table 2, breeds of dogs involved

Siberian husky
Coonhound
Dachshund
Chow chow
Pit bull
Sheepdog-type dog
Malamute
Labrador Retriever
Chesapeake Bay Retriever
St. Bernard
German Shepherd dog
Wolfdog
Golden Retriever
Mixed breed (no discernable breed visible)
Rottweiler

Note: Breeds were chosen for this sample only if dogs of that breed have been involved in more than one human fatality (i.e., Airedale Terrier, Pomeranian, Jack Russell Terrier, *et.al*, were not used as only one human fatality has been attributed to each of these breeds in the United States).

ⁱ A list of fatal wounds/breed matches may be obtained by request.