

Final Report on Dog Bite-Related Fatalities 2013

DOG BITE-RELATED FATALITIES ARE EXCEEDINGLY RARE.

The interactions between dogs and humans are so numerous and complex that no one factor can be considered, in isolation from any other factors, to be the sole cause.

There were 32 verified dog bite-related fatalities (DBRFs) in the US in 2013*. They occurred within a human population of 316 million and a canine population estimated at between 70 and 83 million.

National Canine Research Council continues to thoroughly investigate DBRFs using the same methodology described in the comprehensive, ten-year study published December 2013 in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*¹.

MULTIPLE FACTORS CONTINUE TO CO-OCCUR THAT ARE WITHIN THE CONTROL OF OWNERS.

The December 2013 study is the most comprehensive multifactorial study of DBRFs to be completed since the subject was first studied in the 1970's. Covering all incidents that occurred during the ten-year period 2000 - 2009, it is based on investigative techniques and data developed by National Canine Research Council not previously employed in dog bite or DBRF studies.

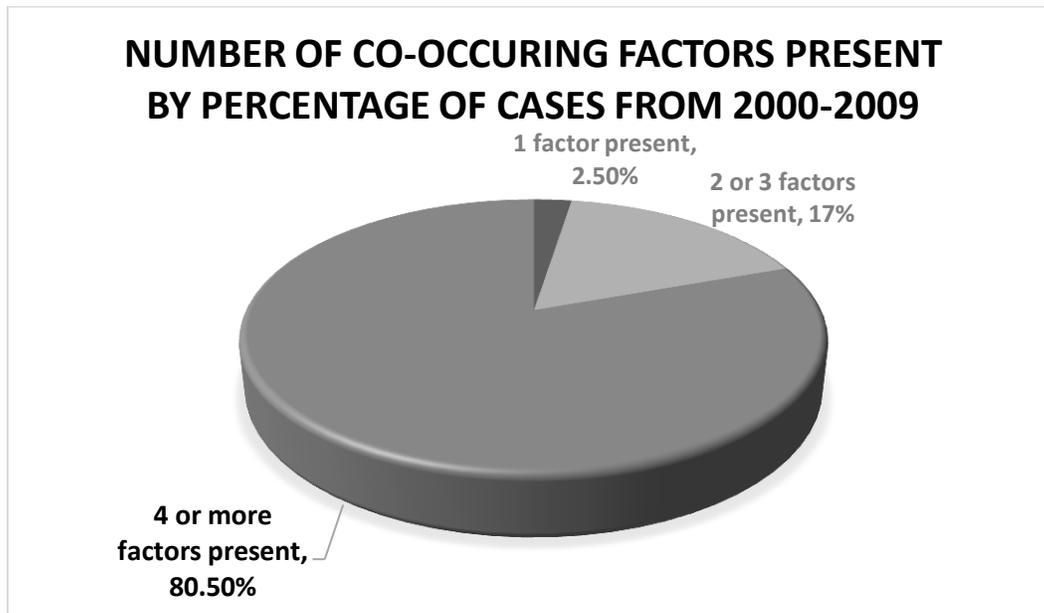
The study reliably identified seven factors potentially within the control of dog owners and caretakers that co-occurred, in various combinations, in the overwhelming majority of DBRFs the authors examined:

Factor	Cases from 2000-2009 with this factor present
No able-bodied person being present to intervene.	87.1%
The victim having no familiar relationship with the dog(s).	85.2%
The owner failing to neuter/spay the dog(s).	84.4%
A victim's compromised ability, whether based on age or physical condition, to manage their interactions with the dog(s).	77.4%
The owner keeping dog(s) as resident, rather than as a family pet.	76.2%
The owner's prior mismanagement of the dog(s).	37.5%
The owner's abuse or neglect of the dog(s).	21.1%

The study, as had DBRF studies published previously, found no evidence that one kind of dog is more likely to injure a human being than another kind of dog.

THESE FACTORS CO-OCCUR: THERE IS NO SINGLE FACTOR.

Four or more of the factors identified co-occurred in 80.5% of the incidents during the ten-year period studied. Only very rarely (in 2.5% of the cases) was there only one factor identified. Serious and fatal dog bite incidents are complex, multifactorial events.



CRIMINAL CHARGES.

Another consistent finding has been the ongoing increase in the percentage of reckless owners or caretakers of dogs involved in DBRFs that have been charged with crimes in connection with the incident, having doubled in the last decade.

From 1990 to 1999 less than 12% of owners or caretakers were criminally charged. From 2000-2013 more than 25% of owners or caretakers were charged with a criminal offense related to a DBRF².

THE CONCLUSION OF EXPERTS: SERIOUS AND FATAL DOG BITE-RELATED INJURIES ARE MULTIFACTORIAL.

Annual reports and detailed case histories considered in isolation will not enhance awareness of what the experts have agreed on. Minor annual fluctuations in co-occurrence of owner factors, or dramatic, one-of-a-kind case histories may, in fact, obscure rather than enlighten. No single factor has been shown, in isolation from other factors, to be the sole cause of a dog bite-related injury or fatality. Professionals studying dog bite-related injuries, even when venturing

speculations regarding breed, have been remarkably consistent in their recommendation of pet ownership and child safety practices directly relevant to prevention, and against regulating dogs on the basis of breed or appearance³.

**We define a dog bite-related fatality as a death resulting from the mechanical trauma of a dog bite. Persons dying of causes such as infection following a dog bite or other trauma associated with a dog-related incident (eg, a fall) were not considered dog bite-related fatalities.*

December 31, 2014

¹ Patronek, G.J., Sacks, J.J., Delise, K.M., Cleary, D.V., & Marder, A.R. (2013). Co-occurrence of potentially preventable factors in 256 dog bite-related fatalities in the United States (2000-2009). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 243(12), 1726-1736.

² National Canine Research Council. (2014).

³ American Veterinary Medical Association. (2014). *Dog Bite Prevention*. Retrieved from: <https://www.avma.org/public/pages/Dog-Bite-Prevention.aspx>