

ANIMAL-RELATED DEATHS

ISSN 1839-0528

- Males represent nearly three-quarters of relevant deaths.
- Most animal-related deaths occur on public roads, in the home and on farms.
- Horses, cows & dogs are most frequently involved in animal-related deaths.
- An average of 30 deaths per year were identified as animal-related between 2001 and 2007.

This Issue

- Statistics p.2-4
- Coronial recommendations p. 5-7
- Conclusion p.8

This publication outlines trends and patterns extracted from the NCIS database where an animal has been coded as an object contributing to a death.

Basic demographic details and the types of deaths associated with fatal animal related incidents are examined.

The publication is an update of a previous bulletin published in May 2006 which also highlighted coronial recommendations made and provided links to sources of additional information.

General Summary

Between 1st July 2000* and November 2010, there were 254 deaths identified as animal related which were reported to a coroner and closed on the NCIS database. 73.2% of animal-related deaths involved males, with the highest prevalence recorded in the state of Queensland.

Public roads, the home and farms were the most frequent locations at which these deaths occurred. Persons aged between 45 and 54 died most frequently as a result of contact with horses, kangaroos and bees. Deaths involving horses were most common in people aged between 20 and 24, whilst deaths involving dogs occurred most frequently in children younger than 4 years or elderly people.

The majority of deaths involving horses related to falls. When examining the types of injuries sustained, nearly forty fatalities involved a transport incident with horses, cows or kangaroos. All deaths involving bees and ticks related to anaphylaxis, whilst all deaths involving venomous snakes, crocodiles, jellyfish and spiders were due to bites.

* 1st January 2001 for Queensland data

Types of animals involved in these deaths:

*Bee	*Emu
*Camel	*Horse
*Cat	*Kangaroo
*Cow/Bull	*Shark
*Crocodile	*Sheep
*Dog	*Snake





Statistics about animal - related deaths

Data available on the NCIS database from 1st July 2000 (Queensland data available from 1st January 2001). Data for the purposes of this report was extracted during November 2010, and only closed cases on the NCIS were included.

The proportion of open cases on the NCIS may impact the data set, especially in more recent years. The percentage of closed cases for each calendar year at the time of data extraction is as follows:

Year	% closed
2000	98.7
2001	96.1
2002	96.3
2003	95.6
2004	93.9
2005	96.6
2006	92.8
2007	86.7
2008	75.0
2009	57.0
2010	2.1

Number of Animal Related Deaths by Gender

Female	68
Male	186

Number of Animal Related Deaths by Age Group

0-9	22
10-19	26
20-29	41
30-39	25
40-49	39
50-59	39
60-69	25
70-79	22
80+	15
TOTAL	254

Number of Animal Related Deaths by Jurisdiction

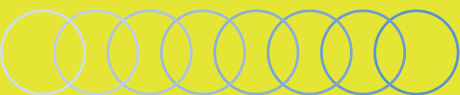
QLD	63
VIC	52
NSW	46
WA	35
SA	24
NT	24
TAS	8
ACT	2
TOTAL	254

Number of Animal Related Deaths by Year

2000*	10
2001	33
2002	28
2003	24
2004	27
2005	27
2006	34
2007	31
2008 ^	19
2009 ^	16
2010 ^	5
TOTAL	254

* From July 2000 onwards (for all states except Queensland)

^ Most likely underestimates since a notable proportion of deaths from these years are still open cases and awaiting coronial findings/closure

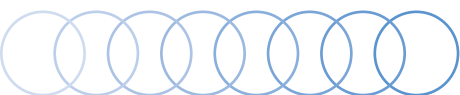


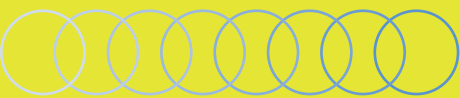
Number of Animal Related Deaths by Incident Location

Street or highway (public road)	68
Home	57
Farm	44
Countryside	39
Sports or athletics area	22
Recreational area	6
Mine and Quarry	<5
Commercial area	<5
Other	13
Unlikely to be known	<5
TOTAL	254

Number of animal related deaths, by gender and age for most commonly involved animals

	Males	Females	0-19	20-39	40-59	60+	Total
Horse, pony, donkey	46	31	16	26	22	13	77
Cow, bull, bovine	28	5	<5	9	11	10	33
Dog	18	9	7	<5	<5	17	27
Kangaroo	The majority of animal related deaths involving these particular animals involved male victims (84.9%)		<5	<5	9	<5	18
Bee			<5	<5	10	<5	16
Shark			<5	9	<5	<5	16
Venomous snake			<5	<5	<5	<5	14
Crocodile			<5	<5	<5	<5	9
Subtotal	154	56	39	58	64	49	210
Other	32	12	9	8	14	13	44
TOTAL	186	68	48	66	78	62	254





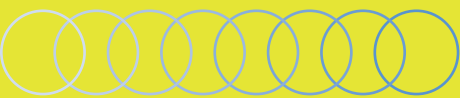
Number of animal related deaths, by most frequent animal and mechanism of injury

Horse, pony, donkey			77
	Fall	46	
	Crushing	14	
	Trampling / struck	7	
	Motor vehicle accident	6	
	Other	4	
Cow, bull, bovine			33
	Motor vehicle accident*	16	
	Crushing	9	
	Other specified piercing / penetrating force	5	
	Unknown / other	3	
Dog			27
	Bitten	14	
	Fallen over	9	
	Motor vehicle accident	3	
	Other	1	
Kangaroo			18
	Motor vehicle accident#	16	
	Unknown	2	
Bee			16
	Bee sting	16	
Shark			16
	Bitten	13	
	Other	3	
Venomous snake			14
	Bitten and envenomated	14	
Crocodile			9
	Crocodile attack (includes combinations of bitten and drowned)	9	
Ostrich, emu			5
	Motor vehicle accident	5	
Other (inc fish,sheep,goat, camel, cat, jellyfish, etc)			39
Total			254

*- Motor vehicle accidents in this group involved the deceased driving the following types of vehicles: car, ute or van (7 cases), motorcycle (6 cases) and other vehicle type (3 cases).

- Motor vehicle accidents in this group involved the deceased driving the following types of vehicles: car (11 cases) and motorcycle (5 cases)





Coronial recommendations (horse-related)

Case 1:

Whilst mustering cattle on horseback, the deceased fell from the horse and was dragged by their foot which was caught in the stirrup.

“That persons carrying out horse riding activity on NSW farms be required to wear a safety helmet complying with *Australian Standard AS3838:1998*.”

Case 2:

Whilst taking part in mustering cattle, the horse that the deceased was riding slipped backwards, resulting in the deceased falling and hitting their head on a solid object.

“Whilst it is the experience of these station owners that experienced riders normally decline the offer of a helmet, I would recommend that the practice of the public wearing appropriate hard helmets in commercial horse riding situations such as this be encouraged, if not made mandatory by tourist operators.”

Case 3:

Whilst training a horse in the capacity of employment, the horse that the deceased was riding has stumbled, resulting in the deceased being thrown heavily to the ground.

“A more rigorous checking system across the Racing Industry should be installed. Perhaps protective vests should be worn on the outside of clothing to eliminate the assumption that a rider has one on. The employers (horse trainers) abide by the Australian Racing Rules and thus do not have systems in place to ensure riders’ protective equipment is appropriate. If this is industry practice, the Victorian Racing Industry (VRI), the governing body, needs to inform employers of their duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* and how *the Act* overrides the Australian Racing Rules.”

Case 4:

The deceased was practicing for a show-jumping event when the horse that the deceased was riding has stumbled over a jump, resulting in the horse crushing the deceased.

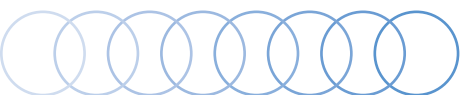
“Regardless of an individual’s experience, I strongly recommend that an activity such as horse riding be carried out under supervision and in the company of others. I commend the actions of medical personnel at the grounds and the foresight of the Club to ensure such persons are present at events.”

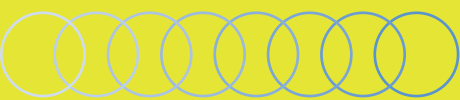
Coronial recommendations (dog-related)

Case 5:

The deceased was an elderly person attacked by a number of dogs.

- “1. In the understanding that the State Government is to review the current *Companion Animals Act 1998* in the near future, consideration is to be given to the following:
 - a. Section 51 “Child Proof Enclosure” – should be defined. The enclosure should have a top and bottom securely attached to four sides.
 - b. That the dogs are dangerous and any changes to the legislation should not be breed specific.
 - c. That *the Act* should express in plain terms that the prime responsibility for enforcement of *the Act* and its regulated remains with the Local Court
2. It should be reinforced with Local Councils that they must be actively encouraging their communities to alert them to any dogs that they believe may be “dangerous” as defined in *the Act*.
3. That all complaints, whether formal or otherwise, about “dangerous dogs” should be documented to ensure a history of that particular animal is maintained.
4. The current registration system should allow a complete history of an animal to be downloaded when required by an authorised officer or any other person with a bona fide reason for needing the information (similar to a criminal record). This would be a Central Register under the *Companion Animals Act* and could be accessed by any Authority.





5. That the New South Wales Police develop forensic procedures/protocols to apply to the investigations where animals have been responsible for death or serious injury. The protocols should ensure:
 - a. The subject animal/s should be DNA tested/sampled. This will enable the positive identification of any dogs/animals implicated in the death or injury.
 - b. The jaws of the “implicated animals” are to be preserved for comparison to wounds and other markings.
 - c. A thorough physical examination of the animal to rule out medical conditions or physical injuries as casual or contributing factors/or aggression.
 - d. Where possible the animals should be videotaped in their environment immediately after the attack to allow some understanding of how the animal deals with its environment (this will not always be possible)
6. That a protocol be established by which information obtained by police in respect of attacking dogs or dangerous dogs be conveyed to the relevant Council for assessment as to a declaration of dangerous dog.
7. That a review of all current protocols in service and delivery particularly in the area of information sharing with the next of kin be undertaken
 - a. The use of information and support officers should be promoted.
 - b. The family, that is the next of kin, could be given information of support services, either legal or welfare that are available to them.”

Case 6:

The deceased was a child attacked by several hunting dogs (cross-breed in nature).

“I recommend that a review be carried out by the Minister and [Council] to ensure that Councils and Council Officers responsible for administering the *Companion Animals Act* are enforcing the provisions of *Section 33 of the Act* in relation to hunting dogs being housed in residential areas.”

Case 7:

The deceased was removed from their cot by the family dog and subsequently died from injuries.

- “1. I commend the Department of Primary Industry for their responsible pet ownership initiative and accompanying booklet “*We Are Family*”. I recommend that together with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, work [be done] to ensure that all parents and guardians of infants are provided with the Department’s booklet “*We Are Family*”. In order to obtain the greatest coverage through their information packages and as a link to their websites, points of distribution could include hospitals with obstetric departments, maternal and child health services, pre-schools, kindergartens and crèches, primary schools and local councils (at the time when dog registration first occurs). Pet shops could also provide the “*We Are Family*” booklet with every dog sold.
2. Victorian primary schools consider the implementation of the “*Responsible Pet Ownership Education Program*” developed by the Bureau of Animal Welfare, a division of the Department of Primary Industry.”

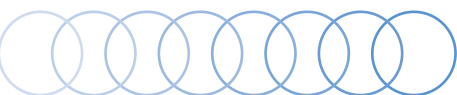
Case 8:

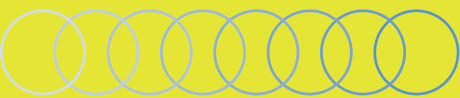
The deceased was an adult attacked by a number of dogs at a camping area.

“As a result of the evidence before me, I recommend that funding for the continuation of the dog management program on the town camps presently being conducted by the ASTC by virtue of funding from FaHCSIA be continued. I would be extremely concerned if, after having heard all of the evidence during this inquest about the success of that program, funding did not continue via some Government authority post 30 June 2010. The current program is clearly an important program for the benefit, and improvement in the quality of life, of the residents in the town camps and should continue into the future.

Whilst accidents can always occur, it is clear from the evidence before me that when dog numbers are high, the risk of injury, harm or even death to humans increases exponentially.

In these circumstances all reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that appropriate funding is provided to allow a program such as the one presently known as “Team Town Camps” operated by ASTC to continue into the future.”





Coronial recommendations (crocodile - related)

Case 9:

Whilst swimming in a national park, the deceased was attacked by a crocodile.

“As discussed herein, the reasons for the implementation of an accreditation scheme in the tourism industry are compelling, notwithstanding the various practical and legislative difficulties that arise. The benefits that would accrue from such a scheme in terms of public safety are substantial. For those reasons, I make formal recommendation to the Attorney-General for the Northern Territory that government expedite the implementation of a statutory licensing system for tour guides which would require, at the very minimum, that all tour guides have training in first aid and that all tour operators carry public liability insurance. I make this recommendation without seeking to suggest that the death in question would have been avoided had such a system been in place.

Upon reflection, I agree that a blanket ban on swimming in [the National Park] would be a disproportionate response to these and similar deaths. I concur with the submissions made by counsel for the Director of National Parks and Parks Australia ... in this respect and recommend amendments to the regulatory regime in the broad terms discussed therein.”

Case 10:

Whilst playing in a creek, the deceased was attacked by a crocodile.

“I recommend that the increased public safety measures which are set out in detail at Sections 4.4-4.6 of the *Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile in the Northern Territory of Australia 2009-2014* are resourced and implemented in accordance with that Program.”

Coronial recommendations (shark - related)

Case 11:

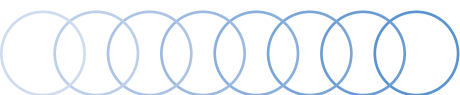
Whilst fishing in a professional capacity, the deceased was the victim of a shark attack.

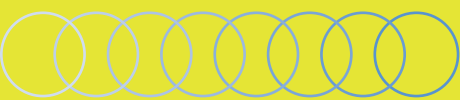
“I therefore recommend ... that commercial and recreational divers, when operating in waters where there is a risk of the presence of sharks, should wear a shark repellent device of the “Shark Pod” or “Shark Shield” type, provided that the equipment should be used in accordance with the manufacturers instructions, and should be turned on for the entire duration of time in the water”.

Case 12:

Whilst conducting research in a professional capacity, the deceased was the victim of a shark attack.

“While in all of the circumstances I have decided not to make a recommendation that the University should make the wearing of shark repellent devices mandatory, I do recommend that no person in authority at the University discourage their use. Indeed, I would recommend that provided effective shark repellent devices remain available, the use of such devices among the University diving community should be actively encouraged.”





Research Reports:

Cassell E, Ashby K (2009). *Unintentional dog bite injury in Victoria: 2005-7.*

<http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/VISU/hazard/Haz69.pdf>

Charles J, Fahridin S, Britt H (2009). *Bites and stings. Aust Fam Physician* 2009 Nov; 38(11):861.

<http://www.racgp.org.au/afp/200911/200911beach.pdf>

Dendle C, Looke D (2009). *Management of mammalian bites. Aust Fam Physician* 2009 Nov; 38(11):868-74.

<http://www.racgp.org.au/afp/200911/200911dendle.pdf>

Kreisfeld R, Harrison J (2005). *Dog-related injuries.*

<http://www.nisu.flinders.edu.au/pubs/reports/2005/injcat75.pdf>

MacBean CE, Taylor DMcD, Ashby K (2007). *Animal and human bite injuries in Victoria, 1998-2004. MJA* 2007; 186:38-40.

http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/186_01_010107/mac10709_fm.pdf

O'Connor K (2009). *Once bitten. Aust Fam Physician* 2009 Nov; 38(11):853.

<http://www.racgp.org.au/afp/200911/200911oconnor.pdf>

Ozanne-Smith J, Ashby K, Stathakis VZ (2001). *Dog bite and injury prevention—analysis, critical review, and research agenda. Inj Prev* 2001; 7:321-6.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1730787/pdf/v007p00321.pdf>

Concluding Remarks:

This information updates a previous publication of NCIS data that was compiled in May 2006.

Horses, cows and dogs were most frequently involved in animal-related deaths.

Horses, cows and kangaroos were commonly associated with traffic incidents resulting in death.

Coronial recommendations made to minimise such deaths in the future have been highlighted in this publication.

National Coroners Information System (NCIS)

Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine
57-83 Kavanagh Street
Southbank
VIC 3006

Telephone: +61 3 9684 4414
Fax: +61 3 9682 7353

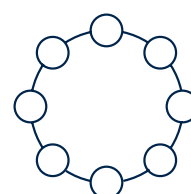
Web-site: <http://www.ncis.org.au>
E-mail: ncis@vifm.org

The NCIS

The National Coroners Information System (NCIS) is managed by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) on behalf of the NCIS Board of Management.

NCIS is funded by each State and Territory Justice/Attorney-General's Department and the following Federal agencies:

- * Australian Department of Health and Ageing
- * Australian Institute of Criminology
- * Safe Work Australia
- * Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- * Australian Department of Infrastructure and Transport



NCIS

