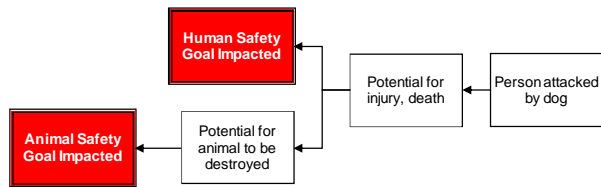
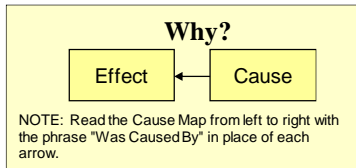


Dog Attacks

The occurrence of dog attacks is a significant ongoing problem. An estimated 4.5 million people are attacked each year, of which 800,000 seek medical care. These statistics only include attacks that were significant enough to be reported, so the actual incidence is no doubt larger. One action that has been taken to reduce the incidence of dog attacks is banning specific dog breeds associated with aggressive tendencies (mostly large breed dogs like Pit Bull Terriers, Boxer Dogs, and German Shepherd Dogs), known as Breed Specific Legislation (BSL).

Although BSL is gaining popularity, it does not address all the causes of dog attacks. A root cause analysis of dog attacks identifies factors related to the dog (inherent temperament, socialization, protective tendencies, location and level of restraint), the owner (treatment and control of the dog) and the victim (behavior, location, age and experience with dogs). The etiology of a dog attack is multifactorial and as such, should be dealt with in a broad and diverse approach.



Some suggested alternatives to BSL that take into account the complex nature of dog attacks and are targeted at preventing all dog attacks follow:

- Education about proper behavior around dogs would greatly decrease the potential for dog attacks. Approximately 80% of attacks are by a known dog and more than half of attacks are against children under 12, suggesting that human behavior around a dog is an important trigger since children are more likely to engage in activities that may be perceived as threatening (such as loud noises, running, improper touching).
- Proper enforcement of existing legislation is a readily available method of reducing dog attacks, as many municipalities have restraint laws that are poorly enforced. An attack cannot occur without the interaction of a dog and person. Proper restraint on and off private property would reduce the potential for attacks.
- Stricter regulations and more frequent inspections of breeding operations could play a role in reducing improper treatment of young dogs. Early socialization plays a large role in that puppies that have little interaction or negative interaction with humans are more likely to develop aggressive tendencies. In most cases this early interaction occurs within breeding operations.
- Encouragement of voluntary spaying and neutering takes advantage of a widely available procedure to reduce the potential for dog attacks. One of the most significant predictors of attack is a sexually intact dog. Outside of a breeding operation there is little reason for not spaying or neutering, and the procedure can have additional benefits for the health of the animal, help control the dog population and reduce unwanted dogs.

Cause Map Detail Level



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