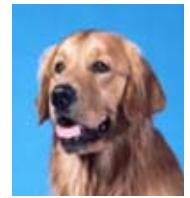




Paws for Concern

Dog Bite Injuries in Massachusetts

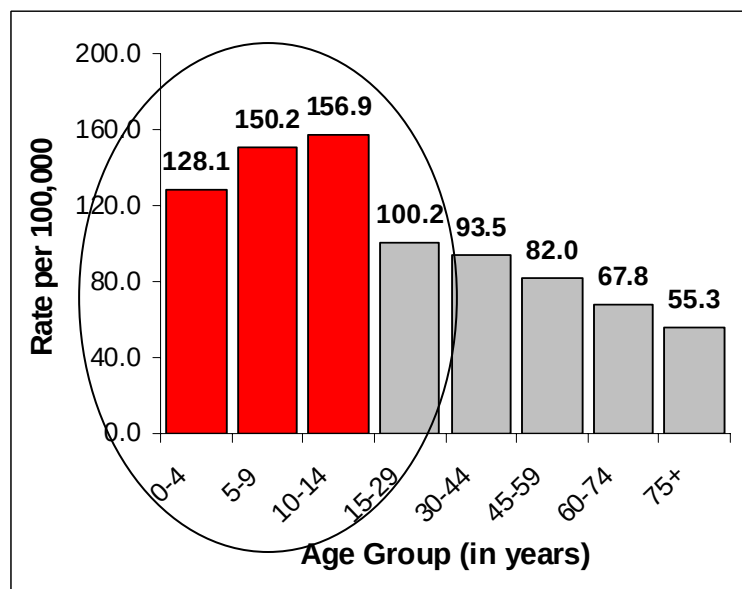


Dogs can be a wonderful addition to a person's life and bring joy to a loving family. We may forget that a dog is an animal with predatory instincts that can be territorial and aggressive when provoked. Because they cannot speak to us and let us know what is bothering them, we may not know when an action we make is causing harm or fright to an animal. A dog's instinctive reaction in defending itself is to snap its jaws. If we accidentally scare or hurt a dog, it may bite.

While dog bites are reportable by law to local officials¹, data are not submitted to any centralized repository, making it difficult to obtain information specific to the incident. Overall counts of dog bite injuries, however, are obtainable from data submitted by hospitals to the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy.



Figure 1. Rate of Emergency Department Visits for Dog Bite-related Injuries, MA Residents, 2006



Source: FY2006, MA Emergency Department Database, Division of Health Care Finance and Policy.

¹M.G.L. Chapter 112, Section 122

Massachusetts Data

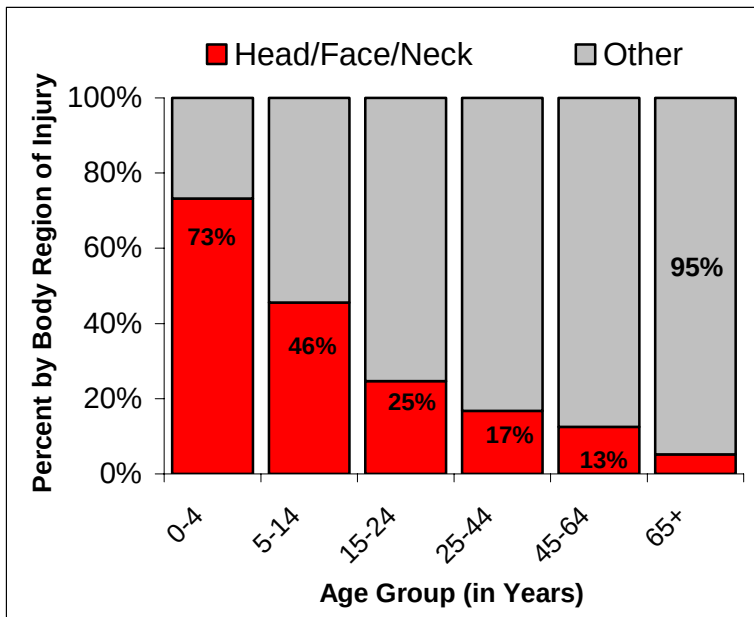
In 2006 there were over 6,300 dog bite-related injuries among Massachusetts residents that required medical attention, 146 of which required admission to a hospital.

Figure 1 shows that children less than 14 years old had the highest rates of dog bite injury-related emergency department visits

- Children between the ages of 10 and 14 had the highest rate (156.9 per 100,000)
- Boys had a higher percentage of dog bite injuries (56.3%) than girls (43.7%).



Figure 2. Emergency Department Visits for Dog Bite-related Injuries by Body Region and Age Group, MA Residents, 2003-2006



Source: FY2006, MA Emergency Department Database, Division of Health Care Finance and Policy.

Figure 2 shows the head, face and neck region to be the area most affected by dog bites among children ages 0-4 (73%) and children ages 5-14 (46%).

- Among all other age groups, other body regions such as arms and legs, and torso, were more affected.

Dog bite injury-related emergency department visits were more likely to occur in spring and summer (3,614) than fall and winter (2,597).

Safety Tips

(Provided with assistance from the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)

DO:

- Train your dog to learn your commands.
- Be a responsible owner, abide by city and town rules.
- Learn your dog's behaviors and keep it away from stressful situations.

DO NOT:

- Do not run, bike or skate near a dog. Quick motions can provoke it.
- Do not approach a dog straight on or sneak up on an unsuspecting dog.
- Do not provoke a dog by teasing, touching, poking, pulling or tugging on a dog's fur, ears or tail.
- Do not approach a dog during feeding, when it's nursing its young, or playing with a toy or stick.
- Do not enter a fenced yard, car, or home where there is a dog you do not know or if the dog owners are not home.
- Do not stare at a dog.

All Dogs Are Capable of Biting When Provoked.



**Treat your dog well!
Keep your dog healthy with vet visits and regular vaccinations!**

Additional Resources:
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty to Animals, 617-522-7282
www.mspca.org

The American Veterinary Medical Association,
1-847-925-8070
www.avma.org