



## Pitbulls: Non-scientific data frequently cited by the media

Publié le vendredi 9 septembre 2016

**CBC**

**Dog bite statistics from anti-pitbull groups are frequently cited in the Canadian and US media as reliable sources. These data are, however, very far from reality.**

A text from **Bouchra Ouatik** to *Discovery*  

The two groups in question, Animals 24-7 and DogsBite.org, openly campaign for the banning of pitbulls. They regularly publish statistics on deaths and bites caused by dogs. However, their data represents only a tiny portion of the serious attacks, and those of Animals 24-7 have several errors.

### **A tiny portion of serious attacks**

The author of Animals 24-7, Merritt Clifton, publishes annual data on the number of dog attacks in Canada and the United States. The group's latest report claims to account for almost all serious attacks between September 1982 and September 2016, a 34-year period. Clifton says he only collects his data from the media, but claims to have a comprehensive picture of the situation.

According to this report, of the 34 years studied, there were 5756 dog attacks causing serious injuries, 4194 attacks mutilating or disfiguring the victim, and 652 deaths. The author defines serious attacks as those where the victim has been killed, mutilated, or suffered injuries that require extensive medical care. According to these same data, pitbull dogs are responsible for 78% of serious attacks, 70% of attacks that mutilated or disfigured the victim, and 53% of deaths.

As a result, there would be an average of 169 serious attacks per year and 19 deaths in Canada and the United States.

But these figures are very far from reality.

### **ACCURACY:**

An earlier version of this text incorrectly reported that Animals 24-7 had accounted for 7045 dog attacks in 34 years, resulting in serious injuries, 4424 attacks that mutilated or disfigured the victim and 675 deaths and that pitbulls were responsible for 64% of

serious attacks, 66% of attacks that mutilated or disfigured the victim and 51% of deaths. In any case, that does not change the analysis that has been made and the conclusions we have reached.

**Animals 24-7**  
All materials copyrighted for the authors, (c) 2014.  
Editor: Merritt Clifton [Animals 24.7@frontier.com](mailto:Animals 24.7@frontier.com)  
Social media & photo editor: Beth Clifton

Culture & Animals   Science   Dogs & Cats   Horses & Farmed Animals   Wildlife   Asia/Pacific   Europe  
Africa   The Americas   USA   Opinions & Letters   Obits & Memorials   **Coming events**   **Donate Today**

## Standing Rock: Who let the dogs out?

SEPTEMBER 7, 2016 BY MERRITT CLIFTON — 1 COMMENT

With suspects identified, will the injured Sioux sue? FORT YATES, North Dakota--Who let the dogs out? Confronting protesters near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation on September 3, 2016 with five to eight leashed but leaping, lunging, and biting dogs, who injured at least six ... [\[Read More...\]](#)

Search this website ...

LATEST NEWS & VIEWS

- > [Standing Rock: Who let the dogs out?](#)
- > [Ashok Kumar, 81, brought India's most notorious poacher to justice](#)
- > [Security guards set dogs on Sioux demonstrators at Standing Rock](#)

The Animals 24-7 website Photo: screenshot

According to a government agency in the US Department of Health, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [\[link\]](#), in 2008 in the United States, nearly 9500 people were hospitalized for dog bites, and some 40 died from their wounds, much more than the numbers put forward by Animals 24-7. Of these, there were 600 fractures, 300 operations that required skin grafts, and 1100 operations on muscles and tendons. These data, however, do not specify the breeds of the dogs involved.

However, in a single year, more people have been hospitalized for serious injuries by dogs than Animals 24-7 has accounted for in 34 years.

# Morts et blessures graves causées par des chiens

Catégorie ▼	Animals 24-7 (moyenne annuelle)	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (pour 2008)
Attaques ayant nécessité une hospitalisation	169	9500
Morts	19	plus de 40 (à l'hôpital seulement)

[Récupérez les données](#)

Data from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons [↗](#) goes in the same direction. In 2015, in the United States, there were 28 079 dog bite reconstructive surgeries, and in 2000, this number was 43 089. It should be noted that the same person may undergo more than one surgery for the same injury.

This large gap between Animals 24-7 data and reality can be explained by the fact that the majority of dog attacks are not publicized. Animals 24-7 manager Merritt Clifton has indicated by email that it is possible that some serious injuries have escaped him.

DogsBite.org, for its part, regularly publishes the figures of Animals 24-7, in addition to keeping its own list of incidents. The founder of DogsBite.org, Colleen Lynn, herself a bite victim, says that her site does not claim to list all serious dog bites, but lists the majority of deaths. She also indicates that her site is not based solely on the media, but also draws its data from other sources, such as police reports, and that its site sometimes publishes cases that have not been mentioned in the media. .

home about us dogsbite blog dog bite statistics dangerous dogs legislating dogs dog bite victims staying safe Donate

**DogsBite.org**  
Some dogs don't let go

In the 11-year period of 2005 through 2015, canines killed 360 Americans. Pit bulls contributed to 64% (232) of these deaths. Combined, pit bulls and rottweilers contributed to 76% of the total recorded deaths. | [More »](#)

**Welcome ::**

DogsBite.org is a national dog bite victims' group dedicated to reducing serious dog attacks. We conduct research on the growing, but underreported, public safety issue of severe and fatal dog attacks inflicted by dangerous dog breeds. We champion the rights of victims through our research, education and advocacy. [Learn more about us »](#) | [Make a donation today »](#)

**Dog bite victims**

Tyler Huston Kara Hartrich Hunter Bragg Joshua Strother Mia DeRouen

Victims of severe dog attacks [often suffer acute damage](#), which may require \$250,000 to one million dollars in specialized medical care treatment. Reconstructive surgery, [such as skin grafts](#), tissue expansion and scar diminishment, often requires multiple procedures over a period of years. Studies show that [pit bulls and rottweilers](#) inflict the majority of these damaging attacks.

[dog bite victims](#) | [victim videos](#) | [victim funds](#) | [victim voices](#) | [victim stories](#) | [dog bite fatalities](#)

subscribe | [Learn more](#)

First Name

Email Address

Go

f e g+ Follow DogsBite

Donate to DogsBite.org »

**64% Pit Bulls**

11-Year Dog Bite Fatality Chart

Q:

The Dogsbite.org website Photo: screenshot

## Several inconsistencies

Data from Animals 24-7 underestimate attacks by races other than pitbulls. For example, according to this group, in 34 years, there were 66 serious chow-chow attacks and 67 Labrador-based attacks across the United States and Canada. However, according to the Texas Department of Health, for the year 2000, in that state alone, there were 67 severe bites of chows-chows and 39 of labradors.

In the Animals 24-7 report, it happens that a single breed of dog is separated into several categories or that different breeds are grouped into one category. For example, the author considers that the "presa canario" (mastiff of the Canary Islands) and the bull-mastiff are a single breed of dog and he groups them in the same category. In fact, these two dogs have different origins and even a different physical appearance. The mastiff of the Canary Islands was born in the 15th century in the islands of the same name, while the bull-mastiff appeared at the end of the 19th century in England.

Conversely, there is one category for the "blue heeler", one for the "Australian blue heeler" and another for the "Queensland heeler", while it is a single race of dog: the Australian cattle dog. There are also dog breeds that do not exist, such as the East Highland Terrier.

Merritt Clifton also states on his website that the cane corso is a cross between pitbull and mastiff, which is impossible, since the cane corso is an Italian dog that has existed since Roman antiquity, while the pitbull was born in England in the 19th century.

In addition, it happens that when several dogs are involved in an attack, the incident is classified only in the pitbull category. For example, in 2007, an 18-year-old man was attacked by 13 dogs, including a pitbull and 12 unidentified race, but this attack is still classified in the pitbull category.

### **Statistics from classified ads**

In his report on dog attacks from 1982 to 2016, Merritt Clifton indicates what proportion each breed represents in the total dog population. However, there is no census of dogs across the United States and Canada, and mandatory registration imposed by municipalities is not always respected by the owners, which makes it impossible to know the population of each dog breed in North America.

So, to estimate the dog population, Merritt Clifton explains that he looked at the classifieds for dog sales on various websites for the month of July 2016. He concludes that pitbulls represent 5% of the dogs and he considers that these figures are representative of the dog population across Canada and the United States over a 34-year period.

Merritt Clifton responded that he did this because there is no other database of dog populations. "In Canada and the United States, only 10% of dogs were registered in 1982 and that's about 25% today. No US city has a registration rate higher than 40%, "he says.

### **Deaths indirectly attributed to dogs**

The Animals 24-7 website sometimes considers that a person was killed by a pitbull even if the dog was only indirectly involved. These cases are classified in the same category as those where the dog bit the victim, even when the coroner asserts that the dog was not responsible for the death.

Here are some examples that Animals 24-7 considers to be pitbull deaths:

- In 2009, in Wisconsin, a 55-year-old woman, Louanne Okapal, died after being hit in the face by her horse. The horse had been frightened by a pit bull.
- In 2009, a 48-year-old Connecticut woman Teresa Foss died of a head injury after being hit by a pit bull. The dog had not bitten him.
- In 2010, 64-year-old Texas man Richard Martratt stabbed a pit bull and shot a catahoula as both dogs attacked a border collie on his property. The man was not attacked by the dogs, but when the authorities arrived he collapsed and died of a heart attack.
- In 2010, in Georgia, a 14-year-old girl, Miracle Parham, fled after being frightened by a dog that witnesses described as a pit bull. She was fatally hit by a car.
- In 2013, a 63-year-old man, James Harding, was hit by a car after trying to get away from two pitbulls.

- A 6-year-old girl was strangled by a chain to which was attached a pitbull. The year and place are not specified.

Another case cited on the DogsBite.org website is a 57-year-old man from Tennessee, James Chapple, who was severely injured by pitbulls in 2007. Four months later, he died of atherosclerosis and problems with alcoholism. Nevertheless, DogsBite.org counts it as a death caused by pitbulls.

### **In opposition to the scientific community**

Both groups are very critical of the scientific experts. The DogsBite.org website even goes so far as to use the term " *science whore* " to describe certain experts. The site's founder, Colleen Lynn, defends herself by saying that this term does not come from her and that it has only been used three times since the creation of the site in 2007.

Moreover, unlike studies published in scientific journals, the statistics of these groups are not verified by independent experts to ensure their validity.

Veterinary researcher Karen Overall of the University of Pennsylvania analyzed all dog bite statistics published between 1950 and 2000 around the world. His research shows that the breeds of dogs responsible for the greatest number of attacks vary according to the year and the region studied.

She is critical of the methodology used by the groups based mainly on stories in the media. "Reports by the media and the police are almost always incomplete," she says, "and there is no independent confirmation of the race involved. These publications use these reports as if they were infallible."

### **Read also :**

- Ten pitbull myths
- How to frame dangerous dogs?