

# **UAM Conference Working Group Statement**

## **DANGEROUS DOGS 2002**

### **Introduction**

This Statement was developed by attendees at the National Urban Animal Management Conferences in 2000, 2001 and 2002, with final wording agreed at the 2002 conference. It represents scientifically justifiable opinion and best practice as determined by attendees including animal management officers, local and state government managers, policy makers and legislators, veterinarians and others with interest and expertise in the field.

### **PART 1. Preamble**

This is a set of currently achievable objectives that will be reviewed and amended from time to time. The majority of dog related injuries are bites that occur to children in the home and are preventable. Owners and authorities have a duty of care that extends both sides of the owner's gate. The only way to eliminate the risk is to ban all dogs and the social and economic cost of that is neither acceptable nor feasible. That doesn't mean that the risks can't be addressed but the aim must be to reduce them as far as possible. Ideally there should be a nationally consistent approach. With the exception of any legislated restricted breed, the targeting of a specific breed is not appropriate. The main problems concerning dangerous dogs (DD) relate to lack of information, education and inappropriate regulation. It is both for community concern and community benefit that this issue is being addressed.

### **Vision**

To reduce dog-related incidents and improve the community benefits of pet ownership.

### **Mission**

To assist authorities responsible for the control and management of dogs to reduce both the level and the risk of dog related injuries throughout Australia through the promulgation of a coordinated National framework of communication and strategies to affect the task of defining and minimising dog related injuries throughout Australia.

### **Reasons**

- The collection and collation of accurate data so informed decisions can be made.
- To encourage a consistency of approach by authorities.
- To seek cost effectiveness through a uniform national approach.
- To accommodate the high mobility of people and their pets throughout Australia.

### **Benefits**

- Provides clarity of responsibility for pet owners and community.
- Community benefits from minimising risks associated with dog-related incidents.

**PART 2. Any DD Policy within Australia should consider all the following:**

1. The determination of dangerousness is context specific.
2. The concept of dangerousness of dogs can reasonably be extended to include dog related incidents towards livestock and other animals.
3. There are a multiple of levels in the recognition of severity in dangerous dog incidents.
4. It must be recognised that a dog of any breed or type can be dangerous.
5. It is only from known incidents of aggression that determination of dangerousness can be made.
6. A standard method of recording dangerous dog incidents is important from the point of view of interpreting the data that can be so generated.
7. It should be possible for a national DD information management system to cost effectively collect, store and collate DD incident report data from across Australia to produce and then disseminate statistics, trends and benchmarks regarding DD incidents of all kinds.
8. In each case where a dangerous dog incident has occurred, fines should be charged to the owners of the dog or person responsible sufficient to cover (among other things) the cost of incident recording at the local authority as well as associated state and national registry expenses.
9. Legislation should be enacted preventing people who have bad records relating to DD incidents from keeping dogs (for a specified period of time).
10. A standard range of post-incident measures related to the grade of attack e.g. signage, muzzling, fencing, penalties, public liability etc, will allow consistency in the handling DD cases.
11. There should be uniformity between all states and territories in Australia in the way DD incidents are handled including investigation, recording and reporting.
12. All AMOs and other relevant authorities should be encouraged to promote measures designed to improve safety aspects of dog ownership to thereby minimise the risk of aggression incidents.
13. All AMOs and other relevant personnel should be appropriately trained to ensure a good understanding of all the following:
  - ❑ Basic dog behaviour
  - ❑ Causes of aggression
  - ❑ Types of aggression
  - ❑ Signs of aggression
  - ❑ Prevention of aggression
  - ❑ Dealing with aggression incidents

## **PART 3. A National Dangerous Dog Database and Data Collection**

### **The Purpose of a National Dangerous Dog Database**

is to

- ❑ Centralise information about dangerous dogs nationally.
- ❑ Make dangerous dog information available to an appropriate audience.
- ❑ Keep up to date information about dangerous dog details and sustained injuries for accurate statistical reporting.
- ❑ Provide a central national framework of accurate information to assist Federal, State and Territory legislative advisors to develop and promulgate effective legislation.

### **Principles of operation**

- ❑ The platform of delivery will utilise the dedicated internet website for recording and retrieving information.
- ❑ Authorised secure users will include Municipal Animal Management/Control Officers, Senior By-laws Officers and Management Authorities, Animal Welfare Shelters, Veterinarians and such other agencies deemed appropriate.
- ❑ Main information entry will be performed by Animal Management/Control Officers.
- ❑ Financially the essential elements are a user-pays system.
- ❑ Information collection, storage and dissemination will address privacy issues.
- ❑ Multi level security will be instituted and only pertinent information will be supplied to the appropriate audience.
- ❑ An extensive validation system will be installed to facilitate accuracy and uniformity of data.
- ❑ Grading of aggressive incidents will embrace the grading system supported by UAM including restricted and guard dogs.
- ❑ The system will be developed under the auspice and umbrella of the Urban Animal Management (UAM) movement.

## **PART 4. Other Issues Necessary to a Holistic Approach**

**Commitment to Best Practice** - All agencies involved in dog management should be encouraged to commit to best practice.

**Breeding** - Only dogs of an acceptable conformation and temperament should be bred.

**Show and Obedience judges** - As the dog breed and the show community are governed by breed standards, the Show and Obedience judges should enter into a code of practice that ensures as much attention must be given to temperament as is to conformation and training.

**Purchase** - Prospective dog owners should be encouraged to evaluate the requirements and therefore the suitability of the potential pet dog prior to purchase.

To avoid recycling problem dogs, people should be discouraged from "giving to good homes" dogs that have any problems.

Education literature should be handed out with all puppies purchased.

**Pounds and Shelters** - All dogs sold by pounds and shelters should pass temperament tests, Vet checked, be desexed, registered, immunized, identified with a microchip acceptable by the Australian Standard and recorded on an approved registry.

**Early Experience** - Socialisation eg puppy school and normal positive socialisation experiences with other people and other animals is necessary and should be encouraged. Owners should be educated in keeping their dogs happy in their absence and to avoid over-attachment.

**Ongoing Training/Education** – All authorities should ensure that relevant education material is provided and reviewed biannually at least.

Dog owners should be educated that obedience school and socialisation is important and ideally should be on going.

Education should be provided to children on how to behave around dogs.

**Owner responsibility and behaviour** - Owners should be educated in the principles of responsible pet ownership.

Owners of dogs should be aware that they are morally and legally responsible for their dog's actions.

Dog owners should be educated that all dogs have the potential to bite.

Authorities should carry the responsibility of educating children of both the dangers and benefits of dog ownership.

All people should be educated that young children must not be left unsupervised with dogs.

**Businesses related to guard dogs** should have properly trained personnel and a qualified trainer in an acceptable course should train their dogs.

**Back yard breeders'** activities should be discouraged in information provided by authorities.

## Appendix one

### Suggestions for Grading Dangerous Dogs

(After an aggressive incident a veterinarian of the Authorities' choice at the expense of the owner should examine the dog in question.)

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCE</b>
<b>1.</b>	Guard or patrol dog, restricted breed or other dog that has undergone any part or form of attack training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Dog must be identified using an Australian Standard microchip with data on an accredited registry.</li> <li>b. Owner ideally would undergo an approved training course in responsible ownership.</li> <li>c. May have to be kept in a specified enclosure</li> <li>d. Handlers of Patrol Dogs should be trained.</li> </ul>
<b>2. &amp; 3.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Dog that exhibits unacceptable aggression without actually biting</li> <li>3. Dog that bites once after provocation (where the response was unreasonable given the provocation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Dog must be identified using an Australian Standard microchip with data on an accredited registry</li> <li>b. Owner and dog must undergo approved training courses</li> <li>c. Dog must be on leash and under control at all times when off the owner's property</li> <li>d. Must not have access from the driveway to the front door of the owner's property</li> </ul>
<b>4. &amp; 5.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Dog that multiple bites after provocation (where the response is unreasonable given the provocation)</li> <li>5. Dog that has nipped or bitten once without provocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Dog must be identified using an Australian Standard microchip with data on an accredited registry.</li> <li>b. Owner and dog must undergo approved training courses</li> <li>c. Dog must be on leash, under control and muzzled at all times when off premises.</li> <li>d. Must not have access to path between gate and front door and with an approved warning sign.</li> <li>e. Dog must be desexed at owner's expense.</li> <li>f. Must wear an approved identifying collar</li> <li>g. Owner must obtain public liability insurance to keep the dog.</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	Dog that multiple bites without provocation	Euthanasia unless owner prepared to make exceptional efforts including all of the above for levels 4 & 5 plus confinement to a child/dog proof enclosure
<b>7.</b>	Life threatening attack (potential grievous bodily harm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Euthanasia</li> <li>b. Prohibition order for owner</li> </ul>