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Background Humans and dogs have developed a mutually beneficial relationship that has spanned thousands of years. The evolution of society however, has changed the nature of human–dog relationship. Dog bites can cause serious injury and in some instances lead to death. Is it possible for humans and dogs to cohabitate without people being injured?

Aims/Objectives/Purpose To explore the epidemiology of dog bite injury in Queensland, and community response to a fatal dog attack.

Methods (1) Data on dog bite injuries between 1999 and 2010 were extracted from Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit (QISU), Emergency Department data. (2) Frequency and circumstances of dog bites in the population were investigated via the Queensland Social Survey (a state wide telephone survey of people 18 years+). (3) Community response to a fatal dog attack was examined through qualitative analysis of comments posted in response to a national newspaper article regarding a fatal dog attack 2011.

Results/Outcome Between 1999 and 2011, 5680 patients were treated for a dog bite injury in Queensland EDs (8 per week). Not all EDs in Queensland are captured in the QISU database, so this is an underestimate. Almost half of these occurred in children (43%). Ten percent of participants in the QSS indicated someone in their household was bitten by a dog in the last 3 years. Of the 402 newspaper comments on the fatal dog attack themes included enforcement, government regulation and positives/negatives of banning specific breeds.

Significance/Contribution to the Field This research explores the epidemiology of dog bite injury, and community perceptions regarding prevention strategies.