

# Do “PIT BULL” DOGS INFLICT INJURIES UNLIKE OTHER DOGS?

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Graphic depictions of exceedingly rare dog bite-related fatalities are something NCRC has been hesitant to describe. Dog bite-related fatalities are vanishingly rare occurrences; a person is five times more likely to be struck and killed by lightning than to be killed by a dog. There seemed no useful purpose in addressing the nature and type of injuries a victim sustained during such a rare event, nor would we ever wish to compromise the privacy of victims or sensationalize their tragedies.

**“No type of dog has a particular method of inflicting injury; claims that one type of dog inflicts injuries unlike other types have no merit.”**

Unfortunately, certain groups and individuals seek to capitalize on the already disproportionate dread that some people feel toward dogs. They persist in making claims about the severity and nature of incidents involving “pit bull” dogs versus other types of dogs. They expose victims’ identities and traffic in descriptions of the victims’ injuries in order to forward their personal theories and agenda.

Claims about the “unique damage that ‘pit bull’ dogs inflict” are made by individuals or special interest groups with no knowledge or experience in analyzing dog bite-related injuries that result in a fatality. In the interest of accuracy and fairness, NCRC feels compelled to address these tactics and claims.

For nearly two decades, NCRC has investigated and analyzed injuries from every dog bite-related fatality for which data is available and has found that no type of dog has a particular method of inflicting injury; claims that one type of dog inflicts injuries unlike other types have no merit.

On the following page is a list of 15 victims of dog bite-related fatalities (Table 1), along with descriptions of the fatal wounds listed on the autopsy reports. Each victim was killed by a single dog. There are 15 breeds or types of dogs represented in these incidents<sup>i</sup> (Table 2).

Not only is it impossible to match the incidents listed in Table 1 with the dogs listed in Table 2, it is impossible to determine which breed or type of dog is responsible for *any* injury based solely upon examination of injuries, autopsy reports or photos.

*Table 1: Fatal Wound Descriptions*

<b>Victim 1:</b> Multiple penetrating wounds to the abdomen
<b>Victim 2:</b> Collapsed lungs, multiple wounds to the chest, partial devourment
<b>Victim 3:</b> Massive head and neck injuries
<b>Victim 4:</b> Multiple bite wounds, dismemberment
<b>Victim 5:</b> Extensive scalp and neck injuries
<b>Victim 6:</b> Multiple lacerations of scalp and neck, depressed skull fracture
<b>Victim 7:</b> Exsanguination from multiple bite wounds
<b>Victim 8:</b> Skull fracture and sever bites to upper back and face
<b>Victim 9:</b> Multiple penetrating wounds to back and chest
<b>Victim 10:</b> Severe bite wounds to the head
<b>Victim 11:</b> Severe bites, massive bleeding, broken facial and neck bones
<b>Victim 12:</b> Massive head injuries
<b>Victim 13:</b> Severe , multiple penetrating injuries to head and neck
<b>Victim 14:</b> Massive bite injuries to lower extremities, dismemberment
<b>Victim 15:</b> Severe scalp, facial wounds, laceration of jugular

*Table 2: Breeds of Dogs Involved\**

Siberian Husky
Coonhound
Dachshund
Chow Chow
“pit bull” dog
Sheepdog-type dog
Malamute
Labrador Retriever
Chesapeake Bay Retriever
St. Bernard
German Shepherd Dog
Wolfdog
Golden Retriever
Mixed breed (no discernable breed visible)
Rottweiler

*Note:* Breeds were chosen for this sample only if dogs of that breed have been involved in more than one human fatality (i.e., Airedale Terrier, Pomeranian, Jack Russell Terrier, et al, were not used as only one human fatality has been attributed to each of these breeds in the United States).

\*It is also important to note that in recent years, scientists have established that visual identification of dogs of unknown origin is extremely unreliable; therefore, while we can be sure this list includes varied types of dogs, we cannot be certain of the accuracy of any single breed attribution listed here.<sup>ii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> A list of fatal wounds/breed matches may be obtained by request.

<sup>ii</sup> Voith, V., Ingram, E., Mitsourass, K., Irizarry, K., “Comparison of Adoption Agency Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs,” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 2009, 12(3): 253-262.