

"Dog Bite Fatalities Plummet 33%"

Dog bite fatalities were lower in 2008 than in 2007. Over the decades, the annual number of dog bite fatalities remains within a stable numerical range. These incidents, which are extremely rare, are, to a significant statistical degree, a product of dog owner neglect and/or abuse

Slanesville, WV ([PRWeb](#)) January 8, 2009 -- Despite the increase in the human population of the United States to more than 300 million, and the canine population to almost 74 million, human fatalities attributed to domestic dogs fell by one-third in 2008, over the number reported the year before, Karen Delise, Director of Research for the [National Canine Research Council](#), announced today.

"The fantastically rare incident of a dog killing a human being was even rarer in 2008 than it was the year before," Delise said.

The Council has identified 23 canine-caused fatalities for 2008, as compared with 34 the prior year. Officials investigating the 2008 incidents claim to have identified 10 different breeds or types of dogs in connection with these 23 fatalities, though experts caution that breed attributions are usually made on the basis of physical impression, and should not be considered reliable.

Delise points out that, while annual tallies fluctuate dramatically in percentage terms, the raw numbers have remained within well-defined limits. "Because there are so few incidents, relative to the human and canine populations," Delise notes, "a rise or drop in the number of cases exerts a misleading effect on the percentages."

For example, there were more incidents in 1990, 25, than there were in 2008. In 1998, there were 10. In 1999, there were 27. In 2000, there were 19. Delise, who, over the past 20 years, has investigated fatal attacks extending back into the 19th century, does not consider these fluctuations significant.

"Based upon my research, the number of these incidents is not trending one way or the other, Delise said."

Further, Delise points out that the fluctuations in both the annual total of incidents and in the breed identifications of the dogs implicated, pale before the constant factor that emerges from these incidents: the failure of owners to humanely care for and control their dogs.

In the overwhelming majority of the cases Delise has studied, cases extending as far back as the 1960's, the dogs involved were not family dogs, that is, dogs that lived in the home with the family. Rather, they were maintained outside the home, in pens, yards, or on chains, and/or were obtained for the negative functions of protection, fighting or guarding. Many resident dogs are also victims, to varying degrees, of human neglect or abuse.

[The Council](#) will publish its final 2008 report later in the year, following further investigation into the circumstances of last year's fatalities. Civil and/or criminal proceedings against irresponsible owners, are pending in a number of cases.

About Karen Delise/The National Canine Research Council



Karen Delise is the Founder and Director of Research for the National Canine Research Council and the author of "The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression". (Anubis Publishing) She can be reached at [kdelise @ nrcouncil.com](mailto:kdelise@nrcouncil.com).

The National Canine Research Council publishes well-documented, reliable research to improve the lives of dogs and the communities in which they live.

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