To leash or not to leash

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Background

This paper is the result of research undertaken of reported dog attacks in an attempt to establish the rate of dog attacks that occur in "dog on leash parks" as compared to "dog off leash parks" over the past five years.

The research for this presentation was undertaken by two similar South Australian metropolitan councils being the City of Onkaparinga and the City of Salisbury.

The City of Salisbury has declared their parks to be on leash and has been collecting dog attack data for some years and while the City of Onkaparinga has the vast majority of its reserves off leash and has recorded all dog attacks in its customer request system, however the form of that data did not allow for easy analysis.

Earlier this year the City of Onkaparinga embarked on a project of entering all of the dog attack data for the past six years into a dog attack register. The purpose of this exercise was to enable detailed examination of the data and comparison with Salisbury. The data entry process took three months to complete but provided the information needed to determine whether there were any significant variations or trends between the two councils.

This paper contains analysis of the City of Onkaparinga data and comparison between Salisbury and Onkaparinga

Demographic comparison

From a demographic perspective the two subject councils are comparable in terms of dog numbers, demographic, population, and area. Specifically:

- Salisbury is
  - located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide and
  - is home to approximately 127,000 people
  - has an area of 161 square kilometres between the Mount Lofty Ranges and the sea
  - they have 294 useable reserves in the region with a total area of 842 hectares
  - and have 27,000 registered dogs.
- The City of Onkaparinga is
  - located in the southern suburbs of Adelaide
  - has a resident population of 158,00 people
  - with an area of 518 square kilometres and 31 kilometres of coastal recreation area and is located between the Mount Lofty Ranges and the sea.
  - The city has 316 useable reserves with a combined total area of 1200 hectares
  - and have 33,000 registered dogs.

As a rough guide of their similarity using the above statistics it can be seen that the City of Onkaparinga provides 363 square metres of reserve per dog and the City of Salisbury has 311 square metres available per dog.

Total dog attacks

During the research period from the financial year 2004/05 until 30 June 2009 there was a total of 678 dog attacks reported in the City of Salisbury compared to 866 in the City of Onkaparinga.

To directly compare the statistics we have used a calculation of reported attacks per 1,000 people. It can be seen from the table below that Salisbury had a range between 1.0 and 1.16 reported attacks per thousand people compared to Onkaparinga which had a range of 1.4 to 1.77 attacks per thousand people. While the rate of attack at Onkaparinga appears higher it should be noted that these figures reflect reported attacks and the variation between the two councils could reflect the level of reporting between the two councils rather than the rate of attack.

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Onkaparinga					
Population	153,496	154,514	155,00	155,919	158,061
Onkaparinga attacks	262	275	241	222	231
attacks per 1000 people	1.71	1.77	1.5	1.4	1.4
Salisbury					
Population	118,595	120,523	122,355	125,145	127,514
Salisbury attacks	137	120	141	135	145
attacks per 1000 people	1.16	1.0	1.15	1.08	1.14