

## Desexing reduces dog attacks

Dogs are seven to ten times more likely to bite if they have not been desexed, according to a review by the Dog and Cat Management Board.

Board Chairperson Jan Connolly said the study was a literature review focusing on animal behaviour research and dog bite statistics, as part of an effort to find an approach that reduced the risk of injury from dogs.

“Research has consistently found that intact male dogs are more aggressive than desexed males, and that male dogs are most commonly involved in attacks,” Ms Connolly said.

“Testosterone makes an intact male dog react to a strange person or dog more intensely and more quickly than a desexed dog”.

“The Board’s review found that an intact male dog was seven times more likely to bite, while an intact female was 10 times more likely to bite than their desexed counterparts.

“It is likely that desexing all dogs, with the exception of assessed breeding animals, would result in at least a 4 to 10 fold reduction in the number of attacks.”

Ms Connolly said it was often difficult to identify potentially dangerous dogs in the community before they caused injury to people or other animals.

“There are already a number of strategies in place to address aggressive dog-related incidents under the *Dog and Cat Management Act*.

“However, we feel that it is very important that management should focus on prevention of injury and not solely post-incident management and punishment.

From a public health point of view, desexing dogs is an example of changing the environment we live in to be less risky, rather than relying on human behaviour change through education to reduce injury resulting from dog attacks. This health approach to injury control has yet to be applied to the problem of dog bites in the community.

“In the long term, the Dog and Cat Management Board considers that the breeding of dogs should be regulated to require temperament assessments of all breeding stock. This is consistent with the recently released policy position by the Australian Veterinary Association and will eventually result in building a population of sociable, friendly and amicable dogs.

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She said the routine desexing of dogs could also result in a range of well-known other health, welfare and behavioural benefits for dogs and their owners.

These include improvement in the animals' sociability, a reduction in unwanted litters from indiscriminate breeding while also including a reduction in the risk of dog-related injury to people.

