



Analysis of daily dispatch online and print reporting of American PitBull Terriers (APBT Bulldogs).

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Abstract.

This research paper aims to identify how the Eastern Cape based *Daily Dispatch* newspaper reports on the American Pit Bull Terrier (APBT Bulldog) and whether it was in a mostly negative or positive

light.

The hypothesis at the start of the research was that the reporting would be mostly negative and was based on past experiences reading articles about the APBT Bulldog.

To determine whether this was the case a content analysis was performed on the fifteen most recent APBT Bulldog centric stories from the *Daily Dispatch* at the time of writing.

Articles which were follow ups to APBT Bulldog focused articles and did not offer new information regarding the dogs or were not focused on the dogs were excluded.

Content analysis was used in order to determine trends and patterns within the chosen articles.

It was found that the articles analyzed were largely negative.

Twelve of the fifteen articles were based on what can be considered negative topics like dog attacks and dog fights, perpetuating an image of danger, and unpredictably often associated with the APBT Bulldog.

Language used in these articles, especially those based on dog attacks, was often emotive and sensationalist like “vicious”, “frenzied” and “tore into”.

This type of language was likely used to attract readers and turn the stories into paper sellers.

This is evident in the fact that of the fifteen stories five were featured on the front page, four on the second page, three on the third page, two on the fifth and one on the seventh.

These findings **confirmed** the hypothesis that the articles based on APBT Bulldogs would be mostly negative in nature.

Key words:

American Pit Bull Terrier, (APBT (Bulldog), *Daily Dispatch*, online.

1.Introduction.

1.1 Introduction and statement of the problem.

This research paper will be a descriptive study on how media reports on American Pit Bull Terriers (APBT Bulldogs).

I will specifically be looking at how the East London based Eastern Cape, *DailyDispatch* newspaper reports on the breed and whether

it is generally in a negative or positive light.

The assumption going into this research paper is that it will be mostly negative.

This assumption is based on past experiences with related reporting in both the

Daily Dispatch and other publications.

Thus, the focus of the research will be based on **the latest fifteen articles** from the *Daily Dispatch* revolve around this breed.

Aims of the study.

The aim of this study is to describe how the *Daily Dispatch* reports on American Pit Bull Terriers (APBT Bulldogs).

These findings will be compared to my findings from the literature review.

2. Literature review

2.1 The American Pitbull Terrier (APBT Bulldog.)

The American Pit Bull Terrier [APBT Bulldog], commonly called a "Pit Bull" or "Pit Bull Terrier" or Bulldog is a game working breed of dog which can have their lineage traced as far back as the nineteenth century Bulldogs used in the sport of bull and other animal baiting's.

This was a popular past time in 1800s England until it was outlawed in 1835 (Lockwood and Rindy, 1987).

This would become a major turning point in the future trajectory of the breed as it was at this stage that dog fighting contests would become the main use of the dog and see it bred into what is today the APBT Bulldog (Lockwood and Rindy, 1987).

The American Dog Breeders Association registry, or ADBA is one of the most respected breed registration organizations for the American and South Africa SADB is affiliated with them.

As well as Pit Bull Terrier (Bulldog) (Jessup, Diane) - and therefore their conformation standard is the best starting point when identifying the breed.

The breed conformation standard is the ideal breed type of describing any specific breed.

The standard covers every aspect of the breed, including not only

appearance but also temperament and health and specific traits (characteristics).

(The Kennel Club, 2018).

The accepted weight of 13.6kg is the set standard of a fit APBT Bulldog.

The dog should look athletic but not bulky.

The adult dog should be lean, with smooth, well defined, and firm muscles.

The dog should not be boxy with the tallest dog at any weight being preferred by breed conformation show judges.

The responsibility of these judges is to determine the best representation of a breed.

The APBT Bulldog should be well socialized from 4 weeks old, then show interest in what is happening around it, be alert, confident, not threatened by its surroundings and gentle with family members or their handlers.

A shy or timid dog is considered a major fault.

A degree of dog and animal aggressiveness is allowed and is seen as a “characteristic of the breed standard” (American Dog Breeders Association, 2018).

Despite dog aggressiveness being accepted as part of the APBT Bulldog, any sign of aggressiveness towards humans has been historically bred against (Stratton, 1981) and up to today.

This was due to the fact that when dog fighters and hog hunters and their accomplices would handle the animals in dog fights and the hunt, which are illegal in South Africa (South Africa, 1962).

These dog handlers did not want to be bitten.

In fact, a dog which showed such aggression would be disqualified from competition or breeding (Lockwood and Rindy, 1987).

Media portrayal and reporting on dog attacks.

The English proverb “Give a dog a bad name and hang him.

The virtues of the dog are his own, his vices, those of his master” (Stahlkuppe, 2000: vii) is one which seemingly suits the situation of the APBT Bulldog.

The negative media coverage the breed receives results in harsh judgments made against it regardless of whether the dog is solely responsible for its actions or not.

Karen Delise (2007) in her book *The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression* pointed out that around the mid-1970s, the media had begun to change the way in which it reported on dog attacks.

She stated that around fifty years ago, while the media still loved a story about a dog attack, they were still very particular about going the extra mile to explain the cause of the attack being reported on, often giving possible faults on both sides.

Delise (2007) found that reporting from this era would often note when or if the dog was teased, kept incorrectly or abused whereas in modern days the breed is seen, reported or portrayed as the main cause or at least a large factor in the cause of the attack or bite, thus creating an atmosphere of hysteria and sensationalism regarding the breed most often being reported as the attacker (Delise, 2007).

The breed most reported as responsible for fatal attacks changes over time, and with popularity.

This is seen through the fact that in the late seventies, the German Specialty trained Shepherd Dog, often used in police work, and now admired, was the proverbial top dog when it came to attacks.

The German Shepherd was then dethroned by the Great Dane in 1979 and 1980 before the Rottweiler and Pit Bull Terrier (APBT Bulldog) took over in media reports in the following decades (Medlin, 2007).

This focus on Pit Bull Terrier (APBT Bulldog) attacks or bites in the mass media, even when non-fatal, despite not usually reporting dog attacks (Arluke, 2010) has contributed to many owners of the breed feeling that the media has a habit of selectively reporting on their dog of choice, thus creating an aura of sensationalism as well as a failure to use objectivity and context when reporting on it.

Some go as far as to complain that journalists had become more invested in reporting on attacks involving the Pit Bull Terrier (APBT Bulldog) out of a desire to sell papers (Twining, Arluke and Patronek, 2000).

One of the more common tactics which were used to portray the American Pit Bull Terrier (APBT Bulldog), and at times also the

Rottweiler, as dangerous were statistics from a report released in 2000 by investigators from the Humane Society of the U S, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Veterinary Medical Association which looked at dog breeds involved in deadly attacks on humans (Medlin, 2007).

In a foreword by the AVMA, the organization specifically stated that the aforementioned study, and dog bite statistics in general, could in fact, not be used to determine any breed as more dangerous than another.

The foreword specifically mentioned the Pit Bull Terrier (APBT Bulldog), saying that information which is not readily available would be needed to make such a claim. This included how many dogs, in total, of each breed existed in the country being looked at (Sacks et al., 2000).

This shows the media is possibly willing to use misleading statistics in order to report on the APBT Bulldog.

There have been some cases of notoriously biased and negative reporting regarding the APBT Bulldog, for example, the 27 July 1987 issue of *Sports Illustrated* where the entirety of the cover was filled with a photo of an APBT Bulldog baring its teeth and the headline "BEWARE OF THIS DOG".

The inside article referred to the breed as both vicious and unpredictable.

There was also a *TIME Magazine* article titled "Time Bomb on Legs" which seemed to have the sole aim of demonizing the APBT Bulldog asserting that not even the mentally insane could conjure up something as savage/hellish or appalling as the breed.

It also called the dog a weapon (Medlin, 2007).

It can be argued that this type of reporting would lead to people more inclined to want to own such a dog now actively seeking out APBT Bulldog.

It can be argued these people are more likely to be irresponsible dog owners (Lockwood and Rindy, 1987).

These owners instead of treating the APBT Bulldog as house

and family dog, as a pet, watch dog or game working animal, see it as a status symbol, a sign of their manliness (Cohen and Richardson, 2002).

This would lead to more attacks or bites by this breed occurring.

These are incidents that the media is seemingly more than happy to report on having realized that the term “pit pull” was a paper seller which drew “emotional reaction from the audience” (Medlin, 2007).

This has led to the connotation of violence and ferocity being attached to the APBT Bulldog breed to the extent of violent and domineering people being referred to as “Pit Bulls” (Cohen and Richardson, 2002).

1.2 Dog bites and attacks.

Human controlled factors play a large roll in dog bites and attacks.

These include questions such as was the dog socialized from an early age to be around people?

Was the dog trained (Lockwood and Rindy, 1987) and, if so, was it trained for obedience, protection, as attack dog or fighting?

Was the dog subject to good care and supervision by its owner?

And how was the victim of the attack behaving at the time of the attack?

These factors along with the dog in question's genetic predisposition to aggression are all questions that need to be answered when evaluating a dog.

attack (Lockwood and Rindy, 1987).

Bandow (1996) looked at all 419 dog bites reported to the Toronto.

Department of Public Health in that time period.

He found that while adults over the age of 18 made up 68.8% of dog bites, these adults were more likely to be bitten on the arms or hands whereas children aged 12 and under were three times more likely to be bitten in the face.

It was found that the APBT Bulldog and its cross breeds made up 9.5% of these bites.

This was considerably less than the German Shepherd and its cross breeds which made up 21.5% of bites.

Bandow (1996) found that some of the reasons dogs were most

likely to bite were:

It was provoked, it was owned by someone ignorant to the characteristics of the owned breed and the dog was not properly socialized, confined, or controlled.

He concluded that a dog's temperament was determined by a combination of genetics, treatment, training, and socialization.

Raghavan (2008) looked at all the 28 dog attack fatalities reported in Canada from 1990 to 2007.

He found that 24 of the victims were children under the age of twelve. The remaining four were over the age of 21.

Many of the victims, 22, were left alone with the offending dogs at the time and place of the attack.

Only nine of the victims had any past familiarity with dogs.

The majority of fatal attacks involved two or more dogs.

The APBT Bulldog did not appear on the list of attackers but the American Staffordshire Terrier, a breed often lumped under the term "Pit Bull" (Ozanne- Smith, Ashby and Stathakis, 2001), did once.

Most attacking dogs were found to be reported as "other", "mixed breed" or "unspecified" (Raghavan, 2008).

No South African statistics were available at the time of writing.

1.3 Points of interest in content analysis.

1.4 When performing content analysis on my chosen fifteen *Daily Dispatch* articles I will be looking for points of interest mostly based on the literature review for this study.

Lockwood and Rindy (1987) identified human factors such as containment and socialization as major factors in dog attacks.

When the theme of a story is a dog attacks, I will look at human factors.

When looking at possible human factors one will be able to determine whether the dog is wholly to blame for the attack or if the attack was in part spurred on by human error.

Delise (2007) believed that media reports in this day and age, did not focus on the reason behind an attack, but rather if there was an attack and what breed was involved.

I will therefore attempt to identify if an attempt was made to identify the reason of the attack.

Bandow (1996) found that the majority of all dog bites were on people over the age of 18 and Raghavan (2008) found that the majority of fatalities as a result of dog attacks were children younger than twelve.

For these reasons when identifying victims in stories I will be paying attention to age where possible to see whether the *Daily Dispatch* articles line up to these findings.

I will look to identify whether the majority of attacks reported were fatal or not.

I will be doing this as Arluke (2010) found that the media would report on attacks by APBT Bulldogs even when with nonfatal incidents.

If this is true it may point to the media having either a bias against the breed or an understanding that the term

“pit-bull” is a paper seller which will bump up readership.

Medlin (2007)

identified the use of bias or negative reporting when writing about APBT Bulldog and for this reason I will look to identify if the overall trend of stories is negative or positive in nature.

This is my overall goal for this research paper which seeks to analyze and identify how the *Daily Dispatch* reports on the APBT Bulldogs.

Lockwood and Rindy (1987) found that it was difficult to accurately identify a specific breed of dog and that this made identifying breeds most responsible for bites more difficult.

I will therefore look to find if the *Daily Dispatch* made any sort of concerted effort to properly identify the reported- on dogs as “Pit Bulls” beyond just witness testimony.

I will look at whether a photo of the accused dogs was used and if an expert in the APBT Bulldog, like a breeder, was asked to positively identify the breed.

Research methods.

The methodology used in this research paper wholly consists of content

analysis.

Content analysis is a “systematic and replicable” way of compressing larger bodies of text into fewer categories.

The purpose of content analysis is so that researchers can sift through large amounts of data, or information, in a systematic fashion with relative ease (Stemler, 2001).

It is a useful technique for allowing us to not only discover but also describe the focus of a body of text as well as examine the trends and patterns within it (Stemler, 2001).

Content analysis as a research method allows one to look at articles and ask questions of or draw meanings from them therefore it is fitting to use this method of research when asking how the *Daily Dispatch* reports on APBT Bulldogs.

Content analysis also helps to express one's findings into numerical values which helps to look at things more objectively.

This content analysis will be conducted on a range of *Daily Dispatch* articles.

These articles, published between 2011 and 2018, were obtained through the paper's digital database which archives both print and online stories.

The selection of articles was based on convenience and in order to limit the amount of data analyzed to a manageable size.

The articles on which the analysis is being conducted are the most recent 15 articles at the time of the start of the research.

Articles which were follow ups to APBT Bulldog focused articles and did not offer new information regarding the dogs or were not focused on the dogs were excluded.

For example, an article about a dog attack victim's recovery or life. I was fortunate to be able to interview Gawie Manjaro, of Manjaro Kennels, an APBT Bulldog breeder in the Eastern Cape of South Africa who was able to provide me with so much factual information which he gathered and wrote about the breed over the years.

Analysis.

The first story had the headline *Community outcry after “pitbulls” turn on young children* and was published on 21 April 2018 (Fuzile, 2018) (Appendix A).

This was the most recent *Daily Dispatch* story which focused on APBT Bulldogs at the time of the content analysis.

The topic of the story was a dog attack involving three dogs described as “apack of pitbulls”.

The dogs in question were alleged to have been involved in two attacks which had a total of five victims.

One of the victims was a four-year-old and all of the victims were female and seemingly young dogs were not contained and the gate was left open on at least one occasion, which implies human error on the owner's part.

In one attack the four-year-old suffered bite wounds to her legs and body and in the other one female had bites to her hands and legs and her friend had bites to her legs.

In the story the victims, community members and police spokespersons were interviewed.

The owner was allegedly unreachable for contact and seemingly no effort was made to interview an animal or APBT Bulldog expert.

Descriptors which stood out in the story included phrases like “viciously attacked”, “ferocious dogs at large” and “lucky to be alive” (Fuzile, 2018).

These ways of describing the dogs and the attacks suggest that this incident was particularly bad; therefore, the implication is that this is because the dogs in question are APBT Bulldogs.

Questionable aspects of the story include the use of the phrase “turn on” which implies that the APBT Bulldogs and the victims were familiar with one another despite this not being the case (Fuzile, 2018).

The incorrect spelling of “pitbulls” is used.

No expert in the APBT Bulldog was spoken to and thus it is for the reader to trust the community and victims to accurately describe the breed of the dogs in question.

The next story is *Owner pays up after pitbull attack* and was published on 11 October 2017 (O'Reilly, 2017) (Appendix B).

The topic of this story was again dog attacks but this time the victims were also dogs.

The attacks occurred on separate occasions but the same two dogs, described as APBT Bulldogs, were the perpetrators.

The first attack, chronologically, saw the two dogs venture nine

streets away from their property, kill one Jack Russell and allegedly injure more dogs.

However, the exact amount is never specified.

The second attack saw the two dogs, again out of their yard, bite another Jack Russell through a “7cm gap in the gate” (O'Reilly, 2017).

It is not addressed how an APBT Bulldog would fit its jaws through a gap this small.

The attacked dog had its jaw rewired and several stitches.

Both incidents occurred outside of the APBT Bulldogs yard, which implies incompetent ownership as the owner never addressed the poor confinement of his animals.

People interviewed include the owner of the most recently attacked Jack Russell and the owner of the APBT Bulldogs.

No animal experts of any kind or law enforcement were interviewed.

Questionable aspects of this story include why the paper would report on a dog, non-fatally, biting another dog, no explanation as to whether the first Jack Russell to be attacked was also out of its yard or acting in an aggressive manner, a lack of specifics on the “numerous other dogs” (O'Reilly, 2017) indicates possible hyperbole and no proof or voices regarding the alleged first attack.

When we look at language used one can assume that the Jack Russell's was mentioned in order to attempt to make them seem more helpless against the APBT Bulldogs which were described as having “caused havoc”.

Again, Pit Bull was spelt incorrectly as pitbull.

The third story is titled *Bees kill dog and attack East London residents* and was published on 8 September 2017 (Sejosing, 2017) (See Appendix C).

This story is about a swarm of bees which are terrifying a neighborhood and have killed four dogs.

Only one was named and identified and this was Zeak the APBT - Zeak was in his owner's yard when he was swarmed by bees and stung to death.

The dog's owners spoke of how they could not help and watched as their dog “fought for his life” (Sejosing, 2017).

The people interviewed in this story include the owner of Zeak, a neighbor who also had a dog stung to death, the owner of the house where the bees originate from who also had two dogs killed by the swarm, a bee expert and a BCM spokesperson.

Questionable aspects of this story include why it was necessary to specifically mention the breed of the APBT Bulldog, but none of the other dogs, no picture of the dog for identification, the failure to speak to an expert in APBT Bulldogs and the incorrect spelling of “American pitbull”.

Story number four was published on 20 April 2017 with the headline *Pitbull pair maul gardener and dog* (O'Reilly, 2017) (Appendix D).

The topic of this story was a dog attack.

The victims were a gardener, aged 39, and a Jack Russell dog.

The perpetrators were two APBT's called Cody and Ceaser.

The story details how the gardener arrives at work and is “suddenly” attacked by the APBT Bulldogs.

It is alleged that the owner of the two attacking dogs was standing nearby and that despite screams for help from the gardener, the owner did nothing to help.

The attack on the gardener stopped when he jumped into a passerby's car.

The gardener has “deep flesh wounds to both forearms” and “bite injuries” to his leg (O'Reilly, 2017).

The two APBT Bulldogs then attack a Jack Russell, which had to be taken to the SPCA.

The owner of the Jack Russell claimed the dog would need multiple surgeries.

People interviewed in this story are the gardener, the APBT Bulldog owner, the Jack Russell owner, and a bystander.

There was no comment from law enforcement or animal experts. The owner of the APBT Bulldogs claimed that her dogs were not responsible for the attack despite being involved.

It is claimed in the story that the two dogs often roamed the streets which tells us that the owner failed to properly confine her animals. Descriptors used include words and phrases such as “two rampaging pitbulls” portraying the dogs as uncontrollable monsters, “traumatized” implying that the incident was particularly horrifying, “attacked me suddenly” implying that the dogs were so vicious they attacked without provocation.

“Turned on” implies instability, “pool of blood” drives home the supposed brutality of the incident, “baby being mauled” humanizes the Jack Russell and “two vicious dogs” (O'Reilly, 2017).

Questions raised when reading the story were where the gardener was working, where the attack took place, why the owner did nothing and why she implied there was more at play, why if the dogs often roamed the street did nothing like this happen before, how the dogs may have escaped the yard and whether the gardener antagonized the dogs.

The next story to be analyzed is called *Vicious attack dogs put down* and was published on 21 February 2017 (Wilson and Ellis, 2017) (Appendix E).

The topic of the story is, again, a dog attack.

The victim is one adult male of an unknown identity, and he was attacked by three APBT Bulldogs.

The victim's arm was amputated, and all three dogs were euthanized. Very little information was given regarding the attack with the writer stating:

“Details of the attack still remain sketchy” (Wilson and Ellis, 2017).

Residents of the area said that the man was often seen collecting rubbish in the neighborhood.

Some also claimed to have seen the man attempting to break into the dog owner's home.

The attack, which occurred in Port Elizabeth, was described as both “vicious” and “savage” (Wilson and Ellis, 2017).

Questions regarding the story include.

Where the attack took place, where the owners were at the time,

whether the man was breaking in and why no one other than the police spokesperson was interviewed.

It is also odd that a location orientated newspaper would report on an incident outside of its readership zone, which stretches from the Kowie River in Port Alfred to the border of KwaZulu Natal (blackstar adroom, 2018).

Pitbull mauls domestic worker was published on 10 June 2016 and is the sixth story (Mukhuthu, 2016) (Appendix F).

The topic of this story, like many of the others, is a dog attack.

There was one dog, labeled as an APBT Bulldog, involved and the victim was an adult female.

The dog, which belonged to the victim's employers of fourteen years, was tied up by the victim while strangers were in the yard. After these strangers left the victim untied the dog and continued with her tasks.

She heard a noise and when she went to check it, she saw the APBT Bulldog biting a tortoise.

She then filled a bucket of water and tossed it over the dog.

The dog then attacked her, biting her on both arms, her face, and her neck.

A police van drove past, saw her passed out and bleeding and took her to hospital.

She lost her right arm because of the attack (Mukhuthu, 2016).

The descriptors “mauls” and “savaged” were used to describe the attack (Mukhuthu, 2016).

Possible human factors in the attack include factors such as agitation from strangers having been in the yard and a redirection of aggression due to the maid throwing water over the already riled up dog.

People interviewed included the domestic worker, a police spokesperson, and the owner.

Again no one who could conclusively identify the breed of the dog was interviewed and APBT Bulldog was spelt wrong.

The seventh story was published on 4 March 2016 and titled

Terrified worker bitten in vicious pitbull attack (Mukhuthu, 2016)
(Appendix G).

The topic of the story, at this stage predictably, is a dog attack.

The victim is a 60-year-old male construction worker who was bitten by a dog alleged to be an APBT Bulldog.

The construction worker was taking a break near the property at nine in the morning.

The dog then allegedly came from the bushes on the side of the house, charged at the worker and knocked him down.

The dog bit him on the hip with one tooth piercing his leg and the other tooth piercing his phone.

The construction worker then began punching the dog which supposedly caused it to go for his neck.

The incident ended when the victim's co-workers ran up, causing the dog to back away (Mukhuthu, 2016).

People interviewed in this story included the construction worker, the dog owner and the worker's employer.

There were numerous human factors which seemed to have played into this incident, the owner claims to have bred the dogs for protection, the dog was obviously not properly contained in its yard as it was able to escape and it was alleged that construction workers had been caught on "numerous occasions" throwing stones at the properties dogs, to the extent that one dog had sustained an injury to its head, thus agitating the animals.

Descriptive words and phrases used in this story are "vicious " pitbull attack" implying the attack was vicious because an APBT Bulldog was involved, "charging at him" portrays the dog as determined to hurt the construction worker, "such force" makes the dog sound overwhelmingly strong, "locked its teeth" playing into the myth that an APBT Bulldog can lock its jaw and "punctured his flesh" a particularly graphic way to say bit (Mukhuthu, 2016).

Some questionable aspects of this story include how one puncture wound constitutes a "vicious attack".

Then why the construction worker was so close to the property and

whether he was throwing stones at the dog and how did the dog escape the yard.

Again, no official identification of the dog breed was given and “pitbull” was spelt wrong.

Story number eight with the headline *Pitbull named “Bruce Willis” attacks girl ,9 was published on 4 September 2015 (Tanana, 2015) (Appendix H).*

The topic of the story is a dog attack with the victim being a nine-year-old girl and the **perpetrator being an APBT Bulldog**.

The story reveals that the same dog attacked a 32-year-old woman previously.

In the most recent attack the girl, nine, was walking to the store with her sister.

They saw the APBT Bulldog attacking another dog before it began chasing the two girls.

The girls attempted to get into a nearby house, but the dog caught the nine-year-old by the leg.

She tried to shake it off, but the attack ended when a neighbor who knew the dog called it off (Tanana, 2015).

Not many details are given about the previous attack except that it occurred the previous year on a Sunday morning in a tavern and the victim, who was 32, was hospitalized for a month.

This incident seemingly could have been easily prevented with responsible ownership as it was revealed that the dog was being kept on the insecure premises of an elderly person who would not take responsibility for the animal as it did not belong to them but was instead being kept for someone. People interviewed include both victims, the elderly woman keeping the dog and a friend of the dog's actual owner.

No officials were spoken to.

Descriptors used are: “another vicious pitbull attack” implying that so-called vicious attacks are regularly made by “pitbull dogs” and “ripping into” which is a particularly graphic and inflammatory way in which to describe the way a dog bit someone (Tanana, 2015).

Again, APBT was spelt wrong.

***Pitbull in frenzied EL attacks* is the ninth story and was published on 8 August 2015 (Hollands, 2015) (See appendix I).**

The topic of this story is multiple dog attacks.

There was one dog involved in attacks on four people.

The same dog is revealed to also have been involved in a previous deadly attack on a woman.

The first attack is on a male, aged 28, who when leaving his mother's house hears a dog running behind him.

The male turns around and the dog goes for his foot.

The 28-year-old, fleeing from the dog, gets back to his mother's house and manages to get behind a gate, but not before the chasing dog gets hold of his left arm and rips off his jersey.

The man suffers three puncture wounds to his hand.

While wrapping his hand, he sees the animal's owner chasing after it (Hollands, 2015).

The second attack of the day happened to a 57-year-old male.

As the man was getting out of his car, the dog, again on the loose, bit down on his foot.

The victim reports having fought the dog off for five minutes.

When he broke free, he drove to the hospital to get a tetanus injection (Hollands, 2015).

The third incident happened when the dog ran through a gate and into the yard of a home.

There were two window repair men in the dog grabbed one of the men, aged 57, by the leg and knocking him over.

The owner of the house, aged 35, fought to get the dog off the repairman, eventually dragging it by the neck out of the yard and then closing the gate.

In the process, the owner was bitten on the shin (Hollands, 2015).

People interviewed in the story include all the victims, except for the window repairman and, of course, the previously deceased victim.

The mother of the 28-year-old victim, the boss of the window repairman and the SPCA manager.

Attempts were apparently made, albeit unsuccessfully, to reach the

owner of the dog.

Descriptors used in the story are “frenzied EL attacks”, “bloody rampage”, “mauled my jersey”, “locked its jaws”, “very powerful dog”, “mauling it badly” and “it was horrific and there was blood all over” (Hollands, 2015).

A major question when reading the story is why a clearly irresponsible dog owner was allowed to keep an animal allegedly responsible for the death of one person.

This indicates strongly that the owner has lent a hand to these incidents, particularly in this one when the animal was described as being on the loose indicating it had escaped its yard.

The next two stories will not be in the chronological order followed so far, newest to oldest, instead they will appear in the order in which they were published.

Story number ten is *Injured pitbull puppy's plight draws offers from across SA* and was published on 13 January 2015 (Douglas-Meyers, 2015) (See Appendix J).

The topic of this story is an injured APBT Bulldog puppy which is in need of veterinary help.

The dogs involved in this story are ten-week-old APBT Zara, the injured dog, and adult APBT Bulldog Zeus.

Ten-week-old Zara, who weighed five kilograms at the time, with adult Zeus, who weighed 35 kilograms were playing together.

The dogs had just warmed up to one another and were playing tug-of-war.

When Zara pulled the toy away Zeus pinned her to get it back, this caused her neck to dislocate.

Both a veterinarian and specialist advised that the pup needed emergency surgery at Onderstepoort in Pretoria.

The dog could not be driven there as a bumpy ride would worsen the injury but the two airlines flying out of East London would not transport dogs.

For this reason, the owners needed R30 000 for a charter jet.

The story had apparently set social media ablaze with people reaching out to help (Douglas-Meyers, 2015).

There was seemingly only one person interviewed in this story - one of the dogs' owners.

Descriptors used in this story made the APBT Bulldog pup seem vulnerable, and this was likely to spark emotion in readers. These descriptors include: “seriously injured puppy”, “10-week-old”, “5kg puppy”, “adopted” and “friendly” (Douglas-Meyers, 2015). Questionable aspects of this story include the fact that no comment was sought from a veterinarian and a lack of official breed identification - *pitbull* was again spelt wrong.

Wagtail recovery for pup 'a miracle' published on 23 January 2015 (Douglas-Meyers, 2015) (Appendix K) is the follow-up to the previous story.

This story was used as it was still focused on the APBT Bulldog pup and its recovery.

The story also reveals how much money was donated to the dog. Zara, the aforementioned APBT Bulldog pup, did eventually receive transport to Onderstepoort in order to receive veterinary help for her dislocated neck.

This transport came from SAA cargo.

Vets were astounded that despite X-rays indicating that the dog needed surgery, she started making a recovery without it.

The vet was of the opinion that the pup would heal completely with time.

R4000.00 was raised for the animal's surgery.

The owner of the animal was again interviewed (Douglas-Meyers, 2015).

Descriptors used in this story were “East London puppy” and “okay and moving 100% - driving them mad trying to get out of the cage”.

There were a few questions raised by this story.

Why was the dog only described as an APBT Bulldog in the headline.

This lack of breed identification in the story points to an unwillingness to include APBT Bulldog in good news stories.

There was again no expert interview, official breed identification and *Pitbull* was spelt wrong.

Pitbulls kill woman, which was published on 19 July 2014 is the twelfth story (Fuzile, 2014) (Appendix L).

The topic of this story was a dog attack.

The victim was a 45-year-old woman and the number of dogs involved was four.

Two dogs were adult, and two dogs were juvenile.

The victim and two male friends, one of whom was the home and dog owner, arrived at a Baysville house shortly after midnight where the victim was attacked and killed in the backyard.

It was not confirmed how many of the four dogs attacked her.

The victim was declared dead on the scene.

She had lost a lot of blood and had suffered a “severe neck injury”. Also bites to the stomach and waist.

The two male friends were unharmed but in shock (Fuzile, 2014).

There are definite signs of human influence in this attack.

It seems likely the owner of the dog was irresponsible as a neighbor revealed that the dogs have escaped previously.

An APBT Bulldog breeder interviewed said that APBT Bulldogs which were aggressive were usually trained to be.

A comprehensive list of people was interviewed for this story.

The interviewees included a police spokesperson, a first responding paramedic, a woman from the house the attack occurred, neighbours, the SPCA and a APBT Bulldog breeder.

This breeder was, however, not the breeder of the accused dogs.

This means that the breeder could in no way vouch for the actual breed or temperament of the accused dogs but could give background on what APBT Bulldog in general are like (Fuzile, 2014).

Descriptors in the story are “mauled to death by pitbull terriers” graphic way of saying killed by, “two full grown and two small pitbulls”, “badly mauled by those dogs” emphasizing the severity of the attack, “we are always scared of those dogs” and “pitbulls are humanely [sic]” (Fuzile, 2014).

Some finer details of the attack are missing like whether the dogs and victim were familiar.

“pitbulls” was again spelt wrong.

The next two stories are follow-ups to *Pitbulls kill woman*.

Although chronologically they are more recent, they are appearing after the aforementioned story for context.

The thirteenth story is of dog owner *telling of deadly dog attack* and was published on 23 July 2014 (Hollands, 2014) (See Appendix M).

The topic of the story is again a dog attack.

It is a follow-up to the previous story, this time focusing on the APBT Bulldog owner's recounting of the attack.

This story is relevant to this paper as it reveals further details about the attack in *Pitbulls kill woman*.

The victim in this story is again the 45-year-old woman.

It was revealed that only two of the previously mentioned dogs attacked her.

A puppy is also featured in the story.

The owner of the dogs, the victim and a friend arrived at the property on

which the attack occurred at just after eleven in the evening.

While the owner parked the car the friend and victim walked down an alley between the house and garage.

An APBT Bulldog puppy, which was in the alley startled the victim who, instead of running to the owner's flat, ran into the backyard of the property's main house.

There, despite being told not to open the kitchen door, she did.

The two dogs, one male and one female, who were behind the door and did not know the victim then attacked her.

The owner claims to have hit the dogs with a brick and metal weight in an attempt to stop the attack.

This did not work.

The owner said that he eventually became tired and lay on top of the victim to shield her, but the dogs continued their attack.

He insisted that the dogs were simply protecting their territory (Hollands, 2014).

There were at least two human factors which contributed to this attack.

The victim and dogs were never introduced, and the victim did not follow instructions to not open the kitchen door and leave the yard.

People interviewed in this story included the dog owner and his friend, who was present during the attack.

Descriptors used in the story include phrases and words like “deadly dog attack” and “marauding dogs” implying that the animals had been seeking someone to attack despite the incident being sparked by someone intruding their space, “pitbulls tore into her petite frame”, “frenzied attack”, “brutalize body”, “pitbulls”- “savaged” and “horror attack” (Hollands, 2014).

These are all inflammatory phrases which serve to sensationalize the attack and the dogs involved.

Questionable aspects of this story are why the time of the attack and total number of dogs involved changed from the previous story, no experts of any kind were interviewed, no official identification of the breed of the dogs involved and again “pitbull” was spelt incorrectly.

The final follow-up to *Pitbulls kill woman*, and the fourteenth story, is *Mauled man says pitbull victim could have been saved*, which was published on 24 July 2014 (Hollands, 2014) (See Appendix N).

The topic of this story is a dog attack.

The victims were a 65-year-old male and only one dog was involved in the attack.

This incident occurred in July 2011, three years prior to *Pitbulls kill of a woman*.

The dog's owner, the same individual from the previous two stories, was revving his motorcycle at one in the morning.

The victim went to his house to make him stop and was carrying a hockey stick.

The victim claims that the owner then hit him over the head with a baseball bat or piece of wood, semi-knocking him out.

He claims that at this stage the owner set an APBT Bulldog on him.

He claims the dog bit him on the top of his head and on his arms,

resulting in twenty stitches (Hollands, 2014).

The owner claims that the victim came onto his property and hit him on the head with a hockey stick first.

The owner said that it was after this that he hit the victim with the same hockey stick before the dog attacked the victim.

The father of the owner supposedly pulled the dog off the victim.

The courts had declined to prosecute the dog owner due to a lack of evidence (Hollands, 2014).

People interviewed in this story include the dog owner and victim.

Descriptors used in the article are “pitbull victim” and “mauled” (Hollands, 2014).

Questionable aspects include why the writer thought it fitting to add (pitbull) to the victim's quote.

This shows that the writer sought to enforce in the readers mind the link between the APBT Bulldog and dog attacks.

Other questionable things include why the National Prosecuting Authority wasn't asked about the declining of prosecution in this case, why no experts were interviewed and again “pitbull” was spelt wrong.

The final story has the headline *10 arrested for dog fighting* and was published on 16 May 2011 (Oelofse, 2011) (See Appendix O).

The topic of this story is a dog fighting ring bust in which eight APBT Bulldogs were involved.

Although there was a follow-up story to this titled *Eight EC men in court for pitbull fighting*, which is more recent, the story is not focused on the dogs, but rather the men.

Police raided an APBT Bulldog “*championship*” fight on a smallholding in Plettenberg Bay.

Ten suspects were arrested.

The arrestees were from East London, Queenstown, Plettenberg Bay, Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Authorities were supposed to have been tracking down this ring for five years.

Police were informed that this event was taking place by a member of the public.

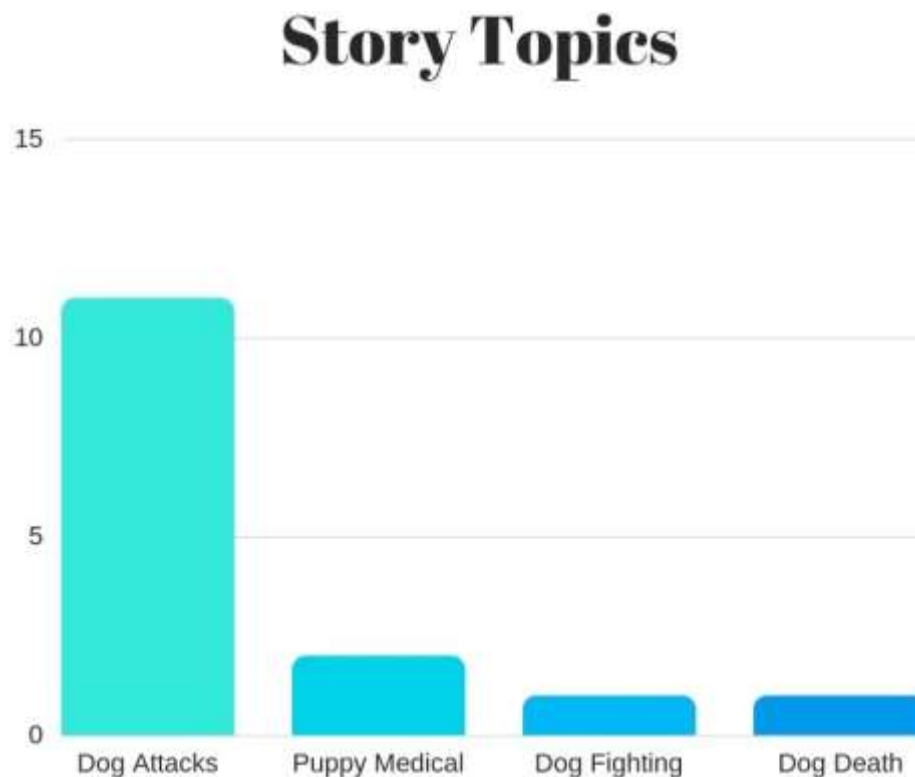
On arrival, two APBT Bulldogs were found fighting in a twelve-by-twelve-meter ring and six others were chained up outside. All dogs were handed over to welfare officials for treatment. Illegal veterinary drugs used to put down severely injured dogs was confiscated from the house.

Government officials, a head chef and children were said to have been attending the event (Oelofse, 2011). People interviewed for the story included a police spokesperson and a local resident.

Descriptors used include phrases like “pitbull championship fight” implying that only APBT Bulldogs could be champion fighting dogs, “illegal dogfight”, “badly injured” and “champion fighters” (Oelofse, 2011) driving home that APBT Bulldogs are fighting animals and thus maintaining their 'bad boy' image.

2. Findings.

1. Story topics.



Of the fifteen APBT Bulldog centric stories analyzed as part of this research paper it was found that the vast majority concentrated on the topic of dog attacks.

Figure 1g 1. Stories by topic.

Eleven (86.7%) of the stories were focused on dog attacks, both on people and other dogs, two (13.3%) were focused on the medical journey of a specific APBT Bulldog puppy, one (6.7%) was focused on a dog fighting bust and one (6.7%) was focused on the death of four dogs by bees, with the APBT Bulldog being the center of the story as the only breed specified.

5.2 Negative and positive stories.

When looking at how the *Daily Dispatch* reports on APBT Bulldogs, it is important to try and determine whether the stories have a generally positive or negative slant to them.

In the case of this research paper negative stories will be defined as any story which main topic portrays the APBT Bulldog in a negative light, by playing into breed stereotypes of being violent dogs, and positive stories will be defined as those which possess topics which put the APBT Bulldog in a more sympathetic light. The stories which focus on dog attacks will be put into the negative category as they serve to further strengthen the connotation of APBT Bulldogs and violent episodes.

As Medlin (2007) found, media houses are more than happy to report on these incidents as it leads to the term “pit bull” becoming a paper seller, because it draws an emotional response from readers who learn to associate the breed with frequent attacks and bites.

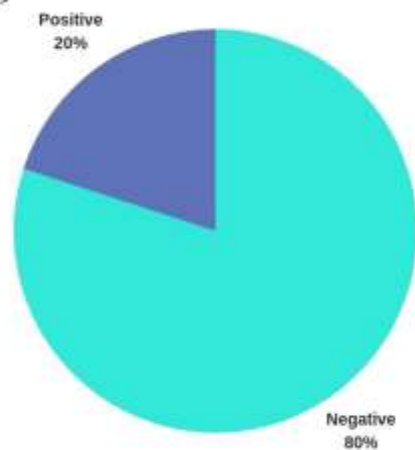
Cohen and Richardson (2002) backed this up, putting forward that the link between the APBT Bulldog and violent attacks has become so strong in the mind of the general population that aggressive and domineering people are referred to as “Pit Bulls”.

The *Daily Dispatch's* frequent reporting on attacks supposedly involving APBT Bulldogs shows that they have noticed this trend and capitalized on it to the extent that they even report on APBT Bulldog look alike type dogs non-fatally biting other dogs (O'Reilly, 2017).

Dog fighting stories will also be put into the category of negative

stories as, like the dog attack stories, it capitalizes on the negative connotation of the breed as inherently violent and dangerous. The stories regarding the APBT Bulldog puppy's medical journey and the APBT Bulldog which was stung to death by bees are being put into the positive category. While the stories may be about generally sad topics they are, in the frame of APBT Bulldog portrayal, positive as they show the breed in a sympathetic and humanizing light. Unlike the other twelve stories they are not focused on negative topics which the APBT Bulldog plays a direct role in.

Negative VS Positive Stories



²
Fig

5.3 Descriptors used to describe the APBT Bulldog.

Besides words used to describe the breed, age and gender of the dogs involved in the story, very few words were used to directly describe them.

Despite this the majority of the nine words identified as direct descriptors could still be considered negative.

These words are ferocious, vicious, marauding, very powerful, champion fighters, rampaging, friendly, East London and humanly.

Ferocious, vicious, marauding, very powerful, champion fighters and rampaging all play into a negative stereotype of an animal which is not only strong (very powerful) but also dangerous (ferocious, vicious) and intentionally so (marauding).

The two positive descriptors identified were: friendly and humanly.

Friendly breaks the mold and describes a member of the breed positively and humanly was used by an APBT Bulldog breeder who was trying to explain that unless intentionally trained to be aggressive or an attack dog the APBT Bulldog APBT Bulldogs is not usually vicious towards people and responds to the way it is treated.

East London is a neutral descriptor and simply indicates where the dog in question was from.

The lack of direct descriptors attached to the APBT Bulldog is likely an attempt to maintain a perceived level of objectivity.

This, however, changes when one looks at how the same reporters provocatively describe the attacks which supposed APBT Bulldogs are involved in.

5.3 Descriptors used to describe APBT Bulldog attacks.

Due to most *Daily Dispatch* stories about APBT Bulldogs being focused on dog attacks it is important to look at how the attacks are described and what this may imply about the breed.

There are far more descriptors used to describe the attacks than the breed on its own.

Most of these descriptors are inflammatory.

Descriptors used include the words and phrases like vicious, charging, force, locked, punctured, savage, suddenly, turned on, pool of blood, mauled, frenzied, bloody rampage, powerful, horrific, deadly, tore into, havoc, another vicious and ripping into.

As one can tell looking at these words, the writers of these stories used language which amplified the perceived violence or gravity surrounding the attacks, the implication being that the attacks are so “vicious”, “savage” and “horrific” because an APBT Bulldog was involved.

Phrases like “bloody rampage”, “tore into” and “pool of blood” paint overly graphic and sensationalist images in the reader’s mind.

“Suddenly” and “turned on” imply that the APBT Bulldogs are unstable dogs likely to attack without warning.

“Turned on” specifically implies the dog in question without notice attacked a person to which it was familiar when in the story this the

case was not.

“Locked jaws” plays into the stereotype of APBT Bulldog type dogs being able to close their mouths with such force that no matter how hard one tries they cannot pry their jaws open.

This myth paints the breed as different and more dangerous than others.

Phrases like “punctured”, “tore into” and “ripping into” are particularly detailed or graphic ways to essentially say bite.

The implication is that an APBT Bulldog could not simply bite somebody, but it must severely injure them.

Although only eleven of the fifteen stories were about dog attacks, there were a total 31 descriptors used as compared to actual dog attacks.

The most commonly used descriptors were mauled which was used six times; vicious, used three times; frenzied, used twice and locked jaws, also used at least twice.

This almost three to one ratio of negative descriptors to incident shows that great effort was taken to portray these incidents in a specific manner.

Looking at the most used words it becomes clear that that portrayal is of the attacks being particularly devastating.

5.4 Victims of attacks.

The next step of looking at the attacks is to identify the victims.

The analysis of the *Daily Dispatch* articles shows that the victims of dog attacks were divided almost equally between male and female.

Female victims were number at nine and male victims totaling eight.

This analysis also shows that eleven of the seventeen victims were adults over the age of eighteen.

This aligns with the findings of Bandow (1996) that the majority of dog bites were on those over eighteen-years-old.

All the victims that were below the age of eighteen were female.

Two of the girls were below the age of ten at nine and four years old.

The exact age of the other females is not given but they were described as “young children” (Fuzile, 2018), which implies that they

are at least minors.

Raghavan (2008) found that the majority of dog attack fatalities were children younger than twelve.

This is not what the analysis of the *Daily Dispatch* articles revealed.

These articles show that the only two fatalities were adults.

One was a 45-year-old female (Fuzile, 2014) and an adult male (Wilson and Ellis, 2017).

Arluke (2010) said that the media would report on APBT Bulldog attacks even when non-fatal.

This is indeed the case when looking at the eleven *Daily Dispatch* articles focusing on dog attacks.

Seven of the eleven stories, 63.6%, were regarding non-fatal attacks.

Three of the stories which were focused on a fatal attack were about the same victim.

5.5 Human factors in attacks.

Lockwood and Rindy (1987) identified human factors such as containment and socialization as major factors in dog attacks.

For this reason, it is useful to identify whether such factors were involved in the attacks detailed by the *Daily Dispatch* stories.

It was found that in all eleven of the dog attack stories human factors played a role, to varying degrees, in the attack occurring.

In six of the eleven dog attack stories, it is clear that the poor confinement of the APBT Bulldogs to their property played a key role in the incident.

This often resulted in the dogs attacking someone or something outside of their yard.

It is then plausible to say that irresponsible ownership facilitated these attacks.

In one story, it was alleged that the victim was breaking into a residence.

It is not uncommon for dogs to bite or attack strangers they deem to be trespassing on their territory.

If the victim were not to have been where he did not belong the attack could have been avoided.

In two stories, it seems that agitation could have possibly played a

role in the attacks.

In *Pitbull mauls domestic worker* (Mukhuthu, 2016) the dog in question was tied up while strangers were in the yard and had water thrown over it when it was supposedly attacking a tortoise.

Both these factors would likely be sufficient to rile up a dog.

In *Terrified worker bitten in vicious pitbull attack* (Mukhuthu, 2016) it is alleged that construction workers would throw stones at the dogs, an act which would provoke the animals to attack.

In *Owner tells of deadly dog attack* (Hollands, 2014) it is revealed that the victim supposedly did not follow instructions of the dog owner and thus put herself in harm's way.

She was instructed not to open the kitchen door, which she did.

Subsequently letting the attacking dogs out - and when she was instructed to leave the yard to put a stop to the attack she instead ran further into the kitchen.

The victim and the dogs had not been previously introduced.

These are all factors which may have played into the attack.

5.6 Breed identification.

When looking at reports regarding dogs which are said to be APBT Bulldog one should consider how we know this is really the case.

It should be considered whether the story included a picture of the dog or dogs in question and whether an expert in the breed was consulted.

The opinion of the community, owner or journalist are not necessarily valid indicators of what the dog actually is.

In none of the fifteen stories did an expert on the APBT Bulldog positively confirm the breed of the dog in question.

Only in *Pitbulls kill woman* (Fuzile, 2014) was an expert quoted or interviewed.

In this case the expert was an APBT breeder, however, he did not confirm whether the dogs involved in the story were in fact APBT Bulldog.

In the majority of the analyzed stories, nine did not have a picture of the dogs involved.

All three stories which were previously identified as positive did not have a picture attached.

This indicates that the paper has a stronger desire to show an APBT Bulldog to be linked to negative events.

Pictures of the dogs are by themselves not enough evidence to conclusively determine the breed of dog.

Hoffman (2014) found that even experts would struggle to determine by sight alone whether a dog was an APBT Bulldog.

Hoffman (2014) also stated that several different breeds like American Bulldogs, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, Bull Terriers and APBT Bulldogs are often grouped together with a number of the dogs being labeled as Pit Bull Terriers Bulldogs.

6. Conclusions.

Analysis of the most recent fifteen *Daily Dispatch* articles at the time of starting this research project has revealed that the newspaper's reporting regarding APBT Bulldogs is largely negative. This is clearly shown in many articles, twelve, being based on negative topics.

These stories were mostly based on dog attacks, perpetuating a myth that APBT Bulldog and look alike pit bull types of dogs are dangerous, unpredictable, and more likely to attack.

The descriptive language used, particularly in regard to dog attacks, also shows a willingness to use emotive and sensationalist language to amplify the perceived negative aspects of the story.

This may be because, like Medlin (2007) found, the paper has realized that these incidents and the term "pitbull" have become a paper seller which draws an emotional reaction from their readers.

This paper seller status is further confirmed when one considers that these stories centered around the APBT Bulldog feature on page one more than any other page.

Five of the stories appeared on page one, four appeared on page two, three appeared on page three, two appeared on page five and one appeared on page seven.

These findings have confirmed the assumption going into this paper – that the reporting regarding APBT Bulldogs would generally be negative.

7. Recommendations.

There is room to expand on the topic of APBT Bulldog portrayal in the media.

Further research could include whether reporters have a bias for or against APBT Bulldogs how this reporting affects public opinion on the breed and how the opinion of non-APBT Bulldog owning *Daily Dispatch* readers

opinions on the breed differ from owners of the breed.

Bite statistics for any breed of dog in South Africa were not available at the time of writing.

It would be interesting to look further into this by establishing relationships with local veterinary hospitals, animal shelters and law enforcement who could provide notice when such events occur.

This would allow a researcher to build these statistics.

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Daily Dispatch, p.5.

See Appendix's A – O – following separately.

That's it - Gawie Manjaro- MK.



