

Date 05 August 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11679

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
Extension 35687
Direct Line 0131 465 5687
loth.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot
richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – DOG ATTACKS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to dog attacks.

Question:

1. The number of attendances at Accident and Emergency departments, Minor Injury Units or other unscheduled care services within your Health Board area where the presenting complaint, diagnosis or recorded incident involved a dog attack, dog bite or injury caused by a dog.
2. Of the attendances identified above, the number involving:
 - a. persons aged under 16 years;
 - b. persons aged 16 years and over.
3. The total number of inpatient admissions arising from dog attacks, dog bites or injuries caused by dogs.
4. The total number of inpatient bed days attributable to admissions arising from dog attacks, dog bites or injuries caused by dogs.
5. The average length of stay, in days, for patients admitted following a dog attack, dog bite or injury caused by a dog.
6. The number of operative procedures undertaken as a result of injuries sustained in dog attacks, dog bites or injuries caused by dogs.
7. Any recorded estimate of the cost incurred by the Health Board in treating patients following dog attacks, dog bites or injuries caused by dogs.
8. The number of patients admitted to:
 - a. intensive care units
 - b. high dependency units;following a dog attack, dog bite or injury caused by a dog.
9. Whether the breed or type of dog involved in an incident is routinely recorded by the Health Board.
10. If the answer above is yes, the number of incidents recorded for each breed or type of dog for the period 2021 to 2026.

Answer:

Please see enclosed spreadsheet. To protect the identity of the individuals involved any figure of 5 or less has not been shown in the table above. Since we do not have their consent to

release this data from their records, the information is exempt under section 38(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act i.e. to provide it would breach the Data Protection Act (2018).

Cost data specific to dog attacks is not held in an extractable format. Under the Freedom of Information Act NHS Lothian is not required to create new records to enable it to respond to your enquiry. This information is not collated or held in aggregate form and it would be necessary to review all case files relating to patients and costs over the period you have requested to assemble the information you seek. Even if NHS Lothian did this – and there would be significant cost implications in doing so – it would be unable to respond in full to your request. The information requested is therefore exempt under section 12.1 – Cost.

Question

11. Copies of any current policies, guidance notes, clinical protocols or data recording guidance relating to the recording, classification or reporting of dog attacks, dog bites or injuries caused by dogs.

Answer:

Within the RIE Emergency Department, the RCEM Best Practice Guidance for Reporting of Dog Bites is currently in use. For data recording purposes, incidents are documented within TrakCare using the clinical notes, presentation and diagnosis fields.

[RCEM Best-Practice Guidance-for-reporting-of-Dog-Bites-Final.pdf](#)

This information is exempt under Section 25 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- Information otherwise accessible

(1) Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it under section 1(1) is exempt information.

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive
Enc.

Notes:

1. A&E attendances include patients whose diagnosis is coded with 'W54 - Bitten or struck by dog' or whose free text presenting complaint contains the term 'dog' combined with 'bit', 'scratch', 'inj', 'attack' or 'wound'
2. Inpatient stays include patient whose diagnosis on discharge was coded to contain 'W54 - Bitten or struck by dog'
3. Patients were counted in the year corresponding to their inpatient discharge
4. Operative procedures includes all inpatient procedures during the admission

Response:

Q1. The number of attendances at Accident and Emergency departments, Minor Injury Units or other unscheduled care services within your Health Board area where the presenting complaint, diagnosis or recorded incident involved a dog attack, dog bite or injury caused by a dog.

Year	Attendances
2021	1364
2022	1639
2023	1606
2024	1604
2025	1701

Q2. Of the attendances identified above, the number involving: 1. persons aged under 16 years; 2. persons aged 16 years and over.

Year	Under 16	Over 16
2021	275	1089
2022	285	1354
2023	263	1343
2024	252	1352
2025	241	1460

Q3. The total number of inpatient admissions arising from dog attacks, dog bites or injuries caused by dogs.

Year	Total admissions
2021	199
2022	170
2023	191
2024	202
2025	158

Q4. The total number of inpatient bed days attributable to admissions arising from dog attacks, dog bites or injuries caused by dogs.

Year	Total occupied bed days
2021	706.9
2022	368.9
2023	460
2024	433.3
2025	355.1

Q5. The average length of stay, in days, for patients admitted following a dog attack, dog bite or injury caused by a dog.

Year	Median length of stay (days)
2021	1.7
2022	1.6
2023	1.8
2024	1.5
2025	1.7

Q6. The number of operative procedures undertaken as a result of injuries sustained in dog attacks, dog bites or injuries caused by dogs.

Year	Total procedures
2021	397
2022	343
2023	376
2024	387
2025	289

Q8. The number of patients admitted to: 1. intensive care units, 2. high dependency units

Year	ICU	HDU
2021	5<	5<
2022	5<	5<
2023	5<	5<
2024	5<	5<
2025	5<	0