

## Dog Bite Accidents – An Overview

At Express Solicitors, we have a team of solicitors who specialise in claims involving dog bites. Claims involving dog bites are notoriously difficult and it is widely recognised that the area of law is extremely challenging which is why we have a dedicated team to help you with your claim.

All of our solicitors dealing with these types of claims are accredited by the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers. As such, we have a wealth of experience in this area of personal injury law, which has led to us continually obtaining compensation for our clients where other firms may struggle.

## Introduction

There are approximately 6.1 million dogs in the UK, with a multitude of different uses, from loving family pets to working dogs. Unfortunately, not all the dogs within the UK are well trained by their owners leading to a significant number of attacks each year on innocent bystanders.

A 2009 study estimated that there were over **6,000 hospital admissions due to dog bites, costing the NHS approximately £3.3 million. In 2013, over 200,000 people were estimated to have been bitten by dogs.**



This doesn't tell the full story however, as often people who suffer attacks by dogs are left with significant scarring both physically and psychologically and pain resulting from those attacks.

## Medical Help Following an Attack

If you, or a member of your family, are unfortunate enough to suffer a dog bite, you should seek immediate medical treatment. **Dogs can carry many parasites, viruses and infections and it is imperative that any wound is properly checked by a medical professional.** Medication may be needed, such as a tetanus injection, in order to protect against certain illnesses and infections.

In the event that you or a family member is seriously injured by a dog, you should call 999 and request an ambulance. Since 2005, 17 people have been killed by dogs. This is particularly true for young children and elderly people, where an attack by a dog can be particularly serious.

## The Law Relating to Dog Bites

The law relating to dog bite claims is governed primarily by the Animals Act 1971. If a dog is classed as a dangerous species, then the owner is liable for the injuries or damage caused.

The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 lists dogs that are defined as dangerous which includes;

- Pit Bull Terriers (includes American or Irish Staffordshire Bull Terriers, Irish Blue or Red Nose and some American Bulldogs);
- Japanese Tosa;
- Fila Brasileiro
- Dogo Argentine
- Any other dog which appears to be bred for fighting or to have the characteristics of a type bred for that purpose.

If the dog isn't classed as dangerous we shall still proceed with your claim and obtain evidence from specialist veterinarians, your statement and any other witnesses in an attempt to prove the dog owner was negligent.



## Reporting Attacks to the Police

It is always a good idea to **report attacks to the police**. If a dog has attacked you or a member of your family, then it is likely to attack someone else. If you don't believe that the attack was serious, you could contact your local police station directly. If you believe the attack was serious, call 999 and request that the police attend the scene of the attack.

Reporting dog attacks to the police allows a full investigation to take place. This allows the precise circumstances of the attack to be documented by the police. It can also help with the identification of the owners of a dog that has attacked. Perhaps most importantly, it can help ensure that attacks from the same dog do not happen to other people in the future.

If you do report the attack to the police, you should obtain a crime reference number and pass it to your solicitor as soon as you can. This will allow your solicitor to obtain a police report into your accident.

### **Obtaining evidence after an attack**

At Express Solicitors, we do the majority of the investigation into your case. There are, however, a number of things that you can do to help us in the immediate aftermath of an attack.

- **Take photos of any injuries** following an attack. You should regularly take additional photographs over the preceding days, weeks and months to show the progression of your recovery.
- **Keep any clothing that you were wearing on the day** in an unwashed state. If clothing has been damaged, it may have important evidence on it that could be of benefit to your case.
- **Write down the exact circumstances** of what happened immediately before and immediately after the accident. It is extremely important that we are able to obtain a witness statement as soon as possible following a dog attack so that important details are not forgotten. If you write down exactly what happened following an attack, it is likely you will remember more when we take a witness statement from you.
- **Keep any receipts you receive for expenses that you incur** due to the attack as these may be recovered in the event that your case was successful. Common expenses include; travel to medical appointments and the cost of pain medication/prescriptions.
- **If there were any witnesses to the attack, make sure you get their name and contact details.** This will allow us to obtain a witness statement from other people who witnessed the attack.
- If anyone has seen the same dog act aggressively or attack anyone previously, get their contact details to allow us to obtain a witness statement from them.
- If possible, **obtain the details of the dog owner** and the breed of the dog.



### **Further information or questions**

If you have any further questions or would like to speak to a solicitor about bringing a claim, please don't hesitate to contact Express Solicitors on 0808 231 4766.