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Chihuahua's bite is worse than its yap



Paws for thought ... Lilly, an 18-month-old Maltese terrier, guards the family home in Forest Road, Kirrawee.

Sunanda Creagh Urban Affairs Reporter
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YOU are more likely to be bitten by a chihuahua than a greyhound in NSW, and dogs find adults tastier than children.

The latest dog report by the Department of Local Government reveals that 873 attacks were reported to councils in the year ending June 2005 and German shepherds bit more people than any other pure breed, followed by cattle dogs and rottweilers.

More than half of NSW councils did not comply with Government directions to provide data on dog attacks in their area, and most incidents go unreported.

"If you are out jogging along and a dog attacks you, most people don't report it to the council. And you often don't get a report if it's the family pet," the department's director general, Garry Payne, said yesterday.

Labradors, border collies and Jack Russell terriers are among the top 15 most commonly reported as having attacked people, but Mr Payne noted this was only a reflection of the huge popularity of the breeds.

Adults were the victims of 43.2 per cent of attacks, and children copped 11.7 per cent of all dog bites. Livestock made up the rest.

Mr Payne said the figures helped inform the Government pet policy, which was updated earlier this year to allow the immediate destruction of a declared dangerous or restricted breed that has

attacked.

Mr Payne said anyone under attack by a dog should call a council ranger or the police, but it is within the victim's rights to fight back if necessary.

"You can take matters into your own hands, but remember there is any number of reasons a dog may attack. They could have been injured or mishandled or provoked and a dog has to be able to protect itself if it is provoked," he said.

New York has introduced a policy requiring all people to get third party insurance for dogs. The level of insurance required is based on how dangerous a dog-assessor finds the animal.

A spokesman for the Local Government Minister, Paul Lynch, said he was not aware of any moves to introduce a similar policy in NSW.

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