

## The unreconciled dangers of stray animal attacks

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Madam,

Dog bite injuries are a consistently ignored issue despite being a common cause of paediatric emergency room visits in developing countries. About 50% of children suffer such incidents in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> In Pakistan alone, there have been 6,212 cases of dog bite injuries reported over the course of just two years, of which 59.7% of cases were from Karachi.<sup>2</sup> The consequences of such attacks include the major risk to a child's health and quality of life, leading to psychological trauma, physical injuries, and financial burden to the family.

In light of this, we must raise awareness of this issue by considering the possible solutions for the stray animal epidemic. In doing so, we would be taking action to protect the most vulnerable people in our society, including children and the homeless. The urban environment of large cities like Karachi makes animal control efforts incredibly difficult since resources are already spread thin. Regardless of these factors, humane efforts to reduce the stray animal population has the potential to reduce disease and injury-related burden ultimately.

Unfortunately, little scientific exploration has been made into the factors influencing the incidence of stray animal attacks. From that which could be found, it is suggested that most incidents involve some component of human error, which tends to be especially true in paediatric cases.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it may be hypothesised that proper education during a child's development regarding the appropriate

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behaviour in respect to stray animals may lead to better overall well being. Other measures to reduce the rate of stray animal attacks on human beings include Animal Birth Control (ABC), a programme directed towards controlling the animal population and preventing rabies simultaneously. It is effective in Jodhpur, India, resulting in a decline in the stray dog population size ( $p < 0.05$ ) in three of five areas surveyed.<sup>4</sup>

In summary, the incidence of stray animal attacks warrants concern from the medical community. Injuries incurred from stray animal attacks are most often present in the paediatric population but may happen to anyone. Awareness campaigns and efforts to humanely control the population of stray animals, such as Animal Birth Control, have the potential to greatly reduce the burden of this source of injury.

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