

Control of Dogs – Dalkeith – 14 December 2018

Experience of participants:

- Two people who had been attacked and seriously injured by dogs as part of an attack on their own dog;
- Eight people whose pets or livestock had been attacked and /or killed;
- Two individuals who had experience in working with dogs.

The key points reflecting the views and experiences of those attending are listed below.

How have you been affected by an out of control dog?

Physical injuries were sustained when trying to stop an attack on their pet dog. Initial hospital treatment was required, followed by two further four and nine-day hospital admissions, for the owner's injuries along with veterinary treatment for the dog. The person is still recovering from the injuries several months later. Both owner and the pet dog have been left anxious around other dogs / going out.

Physical injuries were sustained when trying to save their pet dog from an attack by another dog. Passers-by had to assist in stopping the attack.

Physical injuries were sustained when trying to stop an attack on their therapy dog. The person has been left with scars and the therapy dog is now more timid around certain other dogs of similar size or colour to the dog that attacked it.

Family pet killed by neighbour's dog.

Sheep farmer(s) with land next to a popular dog walking area have sheep attacked on a monthly basis by dogs. 1 dog led to the death of 13 lambs.

Owner's dog was attacked by 3 dogs in a public park. Owner of the 3 dogs also lived nearby the owner / dog who had been attacked and asked not to be reported to the police.

A horse rider whose horse was attacked. The horse kicked the dog in retaliation and the dog owner got angry and tried to blame the horse/horse rider. This was despite the horse owner stopping 4 times and asking the dog owner to keep the dog under control.

A horse rider was unseated and left unconscious when a dog walker appeared in the same area with 17 dogs off lead. The dog walker left the scene but approached the horse rider later that week to apologise and ask not to be reported.

If you have reported an out of control dog, how easy was it and what was your experience of engaging with the local authority, police or courts.

Police were not going to pursue the attack and the owner had to push hard to get it taken forward. Didn't feel the Police took it seriously and, when pushed, they only focused on the attack on the person not the attack on the dog.

One dog attack on a person is waiting to go to court. The person attacked has not been kept up to date.

Family pet was attacked by a neighbour's dog, the Vet advised contacting the police and the dog warden. The police wouldn't pursue.

Sheep farmer has found instances of police insensitivity over death of lambs. Despite police attending, and various meetings being held with local elected, representatives nothing has changed.

A generally agreed positive experience of the local dog warden and an acknowledgement of the demands being placed on one person.

Reported incident of dog being attacked by 3 dogs to the police approximately 3 months ago and have not heard anything back.

Owner of attacking dog 'gave' her dog away when she was under investigation. Dog is now in another local authority area.

Reported to the police via 101 and police said they wouldn't attend, then reported via 999 who did attend and agreed the person was right to call the police due to their own injuries. Police came out the following day and took a statement, the Dog Warden was also called and obtained the police reference number to help with the investigation. The Dog Warden visited the owner and dog involved in the attack and made the person aware that the matter was being pursued but that they couldn't provide any more details. Dog warden also advised if it happened again to call 999.

The dog allows for control notices to be issued to owners of out of control dogs. The notice can include a requirement for; the dog to be muzzled, kept on a lead, banned from specific places or neutered. If you are aware of a dog that is subject to a dog control notice, do you feel it has made any difference to how the owner acts in respect of the dog?

Family pet was killed by a neighbour's dog. The person was aware that a dog control notice had been issued by the Dog Warden but was informed they couldn't be told what the sanctions were.

Person who suffered serious injuries when their own dog was attacked was initially told that it would be difficult to pursue any action against the dog owner as "the dog had to be set upon you".

An owner whose dog had been attacked by another dog whose owner admitted it, had attacked other dogs before the reported incident, but received no information on the dog control notice or if one was even issued.

It can be difficult to get through to the right person at the local authority to report an incident.

There is no clear split between what the police do and what the local authority does. It seems to be decided on a case by case basis which makes it confusing for people to report.

Person is aware the matter was taken forward by the dog warden and can see the dog is now on a lead and muzzled when out but does not know the details of the dog control notice and is only assuming that there is one in place. The person feels they should have been made aware of any sanctions imposed.

What changes do you think need to be made that would help provide more protection from out of control dogs?

Dog licences should be in place to help restrict peoples' access to dogs.

Need regulation of dog walkers to prevent those who take on too many dogs, then let them off leash in social spaces when they have no control over them.

Local authorities need to have the power to remove dogs, the power shouldn't just lie with Sheriffs.

Need to avoid breed-specific legislation as the problem lies with the owners.

Education in schools is needed for the younger generation on responsible dog ownership which could feed back to parents.

Many people work and use dog walkers and as a result they don't know the dog very well and therefore find it difficult to predict how they will react and find they are unable to exercise control over them.

Signage could be provided giving contact details on who to report out of control dogs to in areas known to be problematic.

The NHS should be obliged to report dog attack injuries.

People should be assessed as fit and proper to own a dog.