

Reference: 1596

March 9, 2020

Council Veterinary Program Having Positive Effect on Community Living

Roper Gulf Regional Council is committed to contributing to safe and harmonious community living through improving animal services across the Region. With the Northern Territory having the highest rates of hospitalisation from dog attack per capita of any jurisdiction in Australia, Council has been working to tackle this issue head on, with a management program to make communities safer.

Veterinarian Dr. Samantha Phelan organises the program and has highlighted the importance of education and an effective surgical desexing program in order to reduce the likelihood of dog attacks.

“Desexing dogs reduces territorial and hormonally fuelled reproductive aggression. It also reduces the number of dogs on the ground which reduces pack formation. People have calmer and healthier pets. Desexed dogs tend to listen better and are easier to control.” says Dr Phelan. “We now have many communities with around 80% of their pets desexed.”

Roper Gulf Regional Council teamed up with Sunrise Health to collate de-identified data on dog bites in the region to evaluate the community safety arm of the council program. The dog bites are graded in severity so bites of serious concern can be further investigated.

“The key to the success of this program is education” says Dr Phelan. “Our program has dedicated significant resources to Council, household and school-based education on dog bite prevention and awareness. Children are taught how to read a dog’s body language and respond safely. Adults are made aware of just how truly dangerous a “cheeky dog” can be and are encouraged to report dogs of concern”.

The collected data shows that Council is seeing fewer dog attacks in the communities of Barunga, Bulman, Jilkminggan, Mataranka, Ngukurr and Beswick.

“These positive changes have come about by communities reporting dangerous pets, desexing dogs, better owner control, and fewer dogs running in packs.”

The Roper Gulf Animal Management Program aims to improve public safety, amenity and environmental health via the animal health, welfare and control program.

In house council veterinarians deliver services to the communities of Barunga, Beswick, Bulman, Weemol, Manyallaluk, Jilkminggan, Minyerri, Urapunga, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Borroloola and Robinson River.

The veterinarians are assisted in the field by four casual Animal Management Assistants, local ranger groups and veterinary nurses.

The Roper Gulf Animal Management Team are grateful to all the residents in the Region for their up-take of the vet program, creating changes that will help make communities safer and more peaceful places to live.

END

For further information, please contact Roper Gulf Regional Council on Telephone: (08) 8972 9000 or Email: info@ropergulf.nt.gov.au

GRAPH 1: Number of Dog Bite Injuries per Month

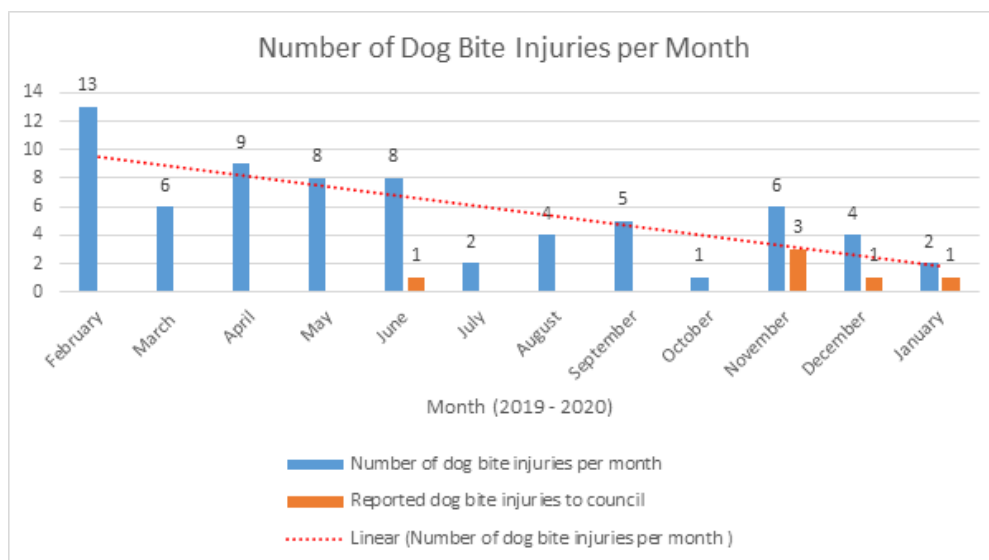
Caption: Roper Gulf Regional Council has seen a decline in the number of dog bite injuries per month over the past year.

GRAPH 2: Desexing Rate – Dog Bite Data Communities

Caption: Roper Gulf Regional Council has seen an increase in desexing rate over the past year.

PHOTO: Five puppies

Caption: This family of five is heading off to be desexed by the vet team.



Desexing Rate - Dog Bite Data Communities

*This includes: Barunga, Beswick, Bulman, Jilkminggan, Minyerri, Ngukurr, Urapunga, Weemol.

