

NCIS FACT SHEET

Animal-related deaths in Australia

541

animal-related
deaths, 2001-2017

32

deaths per year
on average

71.0%

of deaths involved
land mammals

Dangerous animals in Australia

Australia has a reputation for being home to some of the world's most dangerous animals. Thousands of hospital admissions are attributable to contact with bees, hornets, wasps, spiders, snakes, ticks, ants and marine animals each year in Australia (1).

However, deaths as a result of these interactions remain relatively rare, particularly in comparison to deaths associated with other species.

Animal-related deaths

There were 541 animal-related deaths reported to an Australian coroner between 2001 and 2017, with an average of 32 animal-related deaths reported per calendar year. Land mammals comprised the majority (71.0%) of deaths, followed by reptiles and amphibians (10.7%) and insects and invertebrates (8.7%).

Public roads (30.3%), homes (20.7%) and farming areas (19.2%) were the most frequent locations at which fatal animal-related incidents occurred.

68.0%
DEATHS OF
MALES



32.0%
DEATHS OF
FEMALES



Half of all animal-related deaths occurred in New South Wales and Queensland (25.0% each)



One quarter of deaths involved a vehicle incident

Animal-related deaths were more common among males than females



There were no deaths confirmed to have involved a spider bite

**172**

deaths

62.8%

fall-related

18deaths of jockeys
during racing events

Horses

Nearly one third (31.8%) of animal-related deaths involved horses.

The majority of horse-related deaths occurred among persons aged 25 to 64 years (57.0%). A fall from a horse was a primary contributing factor to death in 108 cases.

Over two fifths (42.4%) of horse-related deaths involved trail or general horseback riding.

An additional 28 deaths involved horse racing and 18 involved mustering or stock work. There were 11 fatal incidents that occurred during equestrian events such as rodeo, show jumping and dressage.

In 19 incidents involving a fall from a horse, the deceased was known to not be wearing a helmet.

**82**

deaths

52.4%direct contact with
bovine animal**34.1%**persons aged
65+ years

Bovine

Cows, bulls and other bovine animals contributed to 15.2% of animal-related deaths.

There were 23 fatal bovine-related incidents where the person was working as farmer or farm worker.

Deaths associated with bovine animals most frequently involved circumstances in which the person was struck, kicked, trampled, knocked over or crushed (52.4%) by the animal. Nearly half (47.6%) of bovine-related deaths involved a vehicle incident.

**53**

deaths

49.1%

biting incidents

49.1%persons aged
65+ years

Dogs

Dog-related deaths were most common among those aged 65 years and over (49.1%), followed by those aged under 15 years (20.8%).

Dog-related deaths resulted from biting (49.1%), falls (41.5%) and vehicle incidents (9.4%).



37
deaths

There were 37 deaths involving kangaroos, all of which were as a result of a vehicle incident.

In 20 of these incidents, the person was a motorcyclist.

Kangaroos



37
deaths

Snakes

There were 37 snake-related deaths, of which 35 were known to involve a venomous snake.

Twelve fatal incidents involving snakes occurred in Queensland, while nine occurred in New South Wales and six occurred in Victoria.



31
deaths

Bees

All bee-related deaths involved the person suffering anaphylaxis.

Twelve fatal incidents involving bees occurred in Western Australia, while nine occurred in South Australia and six occurred in New South Wales.



27
deaths

Sharks

The majority of deaths involving sharks were of persons aged between 15 and 44 years (74.1%).

Eleven fatal incidents involving sharks occurred in Western Australia, while six occurred in Queensland and New South Wales.



21
deaths

Crocodiles

In six crocodile-related deaths, the person was fishing at the time of the incident.

Fifteen fatal incidents involving crocodiles occurred in the Northern Territory, while five occurred in Queensland.

1. Welton, R E, Williams, D J, Liew, D 2016, *Injury trends from envenoming in Australia, 2000 - 2013*, Internal Medicine Journal, vol 47, no 2, pp 170-176.

The data presented in this fact sheet was obtained from the NCIS in January 2020. The dataset extracted contained fatalities reported to an Australian coroner between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2017 that were coded as being contributed to by an animal, and where the coronial investigation had concluded and the case was closed on the NCIS. Visit the NCIS website for information on [data sources and limitations](#). To request a comprehensive data report, contact the NCIS or visit www.ncis.org.au.

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