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Territorial Policing Command Headquarters Performance Unit Development Team Intelligence Analysts

The Use of Dogs in Crime

Overview

May 2006

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Executive Summary

1) Dogs Used in Crime

For the period 01/04/2005 – 31/03/2006 only 24 CRIS reports involved a dog having any sort of active role in a crime.

10 of the 18 dog descriptions given were for Staffordshire Bull Terriers.

It is likely that the flag KC – ‘Accompanied by Animal’ is under used. Therefore it is possible that some reports have been missed.

Recommendation - If the use of dogs in crime is to be analysed on a regular basis it may be prudent to add a ‘Dog Used in Crime’ flag to the CRIS system.

2) Are Dogs being Stolen?

The answer is Yes, but not to a great extent.

The number of offences for the past 3 financial years are 228 (2003/04 FY), 239 (2004/05 FY), and 417 (2005/06 FY).

The most recent financial year represents a 74% increase on the previous year.

Over a 12 month period this represents just under 35 offences a month, across the entire MPS area.

The top 6 boroughs are consistently Croydon, Bromley, Greenwich, Haringey, Lambeth and Hackney.

Staffordshire Bull Terriers make up 56% of all dogs stolen.

Recommendation – Further research as to why Staffordshire Bull Terriers are so heavily targeted may be of value to the MPS.

Recommendation – Further research into the offence type of ‘Other Theft’ may indicate if there are any additional common features in reports.

3) How many dogs have been seized under the Dangerous Dog Act?

01/10/2005 – 31/03/2006 = 16 of which 2 were Staffordshire Bull Terriers

01/04/2005 – 30/09/2005 = 31 of which 8 were Staffordshire Bull Terriers

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Background

Project Initiation Document (PID) requested 05-May-2006, sponsor: AC **sec40**

Request for 3 questions to be answered:

- 1) Are dogs being used as a weapon / attack method for use in crime?
- 2) Are dogs being stolen?
- 3) The number of dogs seized under the Dangerous Dogs Act.

Definition

In order to answer these questions the following methods were used:

Dogs being used in Crime

There is no flag or feature / instrument code for dog, however the feature / instrument code KC represents 'accompanied by an animal'. This has been used together with a text search of the Dets page on CRIS for the word 'dog'. The CRIS reports identified were then read to see if the dog was actually involved in the crimes, or was simply present at the time.

Note: All dangerous dogs, and related animal offences have been filtered out.

Are dogs being stolen?

As above a combination of search criteria had to be used to pick out offences where dogs had been stolen. The property code VA – Domestic Pet was used, again with a text search of the Dets page for the word 'dog'.

Dogs Seized

In order to obtain this information **sec40** at DoR Commercial Services was contacted **sec40**

Also included is the number of Dangerous Dogs offences, and the number of people cautioned for these offences.

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**1) Are dogs used being used in crime?**

Using the search criteria for the period 01/04/2005 – 31/03/2006, 49 CRIS reports were identified where a suspect had been accompanied by a dog.

Of these reports only 24 involved the dog having any sort of active role in the crime.

This represents **less than 1 crime every 2 weeks across the whole of the Metropolitan Police.**

The reports were made up of the offences thus;

| Offence | Number of Offences |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Robbery of the Person | 11 |
| ABH | 9 |
| Common Assault | 1 |
| GBH | 1 |
| Other Theft | 1 |
| Public Order offence | 1 |
| TOTAL | 24 |

Types of Dog

Of the 24 reports, 18 gave a description of the kind of dog involved. 10 of these were Staffordshire Bull Terriers (used in 6 of the 11 robberies). Also used were 4 Pitbulls, 1 Rottweiler, 1 Bulldog, 1 French Mastiff and a Ridgeback.

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All but one offence involved a dog being used as either a threat towards a victim, or to physically attack them. The other offence involved the dog being used as a distraction.

In the 11 robberies dogs were used as threats on 8 occasions, only being used for violence on the remaining 3.

Note 1

No other time periods have been analysed due to the very small numbers involved, and the time consuming nature of reading through CRIS reports to see if the dog was actually involved, and what sort of dog it was.

Note 2

It is likely that the flag KC – 'Accompanied by Animal' is under used. Therefore it is possible that some reports have been missed. However this flag is currently the best one available to the analyst looking for dogs used in crime.

Recommendation - If the use of dogs in crime is to be analysed on a regular basis it may be prudent to add a 'Dog Used in Crime' flag to the CRIS system. This would assist to ensure that all relevant reports are picked up.

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2) Are dogs being stolen?

To answer this question 3 years worth of data were examined to see if the number of offences is consistent.

For the 2003/04 and 2004/05 financial years the number of offences where dogs have been stolen is fairly similar (228 and 239 respectively).

However, in the most recent financial year between 01/04/2005 – 31/03/2006 the number of offences increased by 74% on the previous year to 417. The graph below (Figure 1) shows the upward turn in offences.

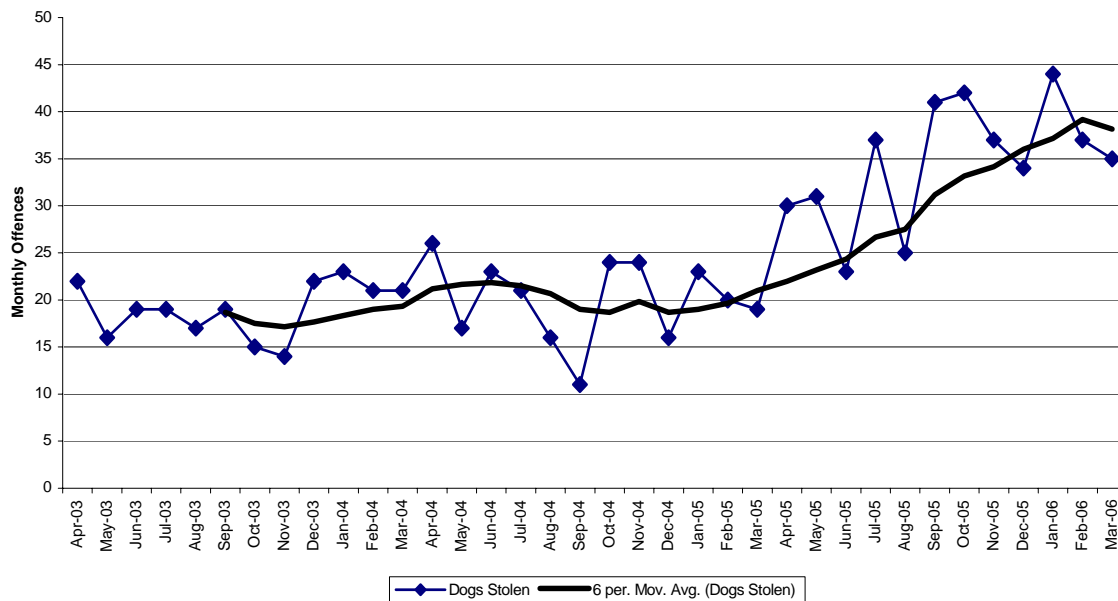


Figure 1: Monthly offences where dogs have been stolen across the Met for the period: 01/04/2003 – 31/03/2006

Despite the increase, it is worth taking into account that 417 offences over a 12 month period represents just under 35 offences a month, across the entire Metropolitan Police area.

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Where are the offences happening?

The below graph shows the number of offences where a dog has been stolen over the period 01/04/2003 – 31/03/2006, split by borough and financial year.

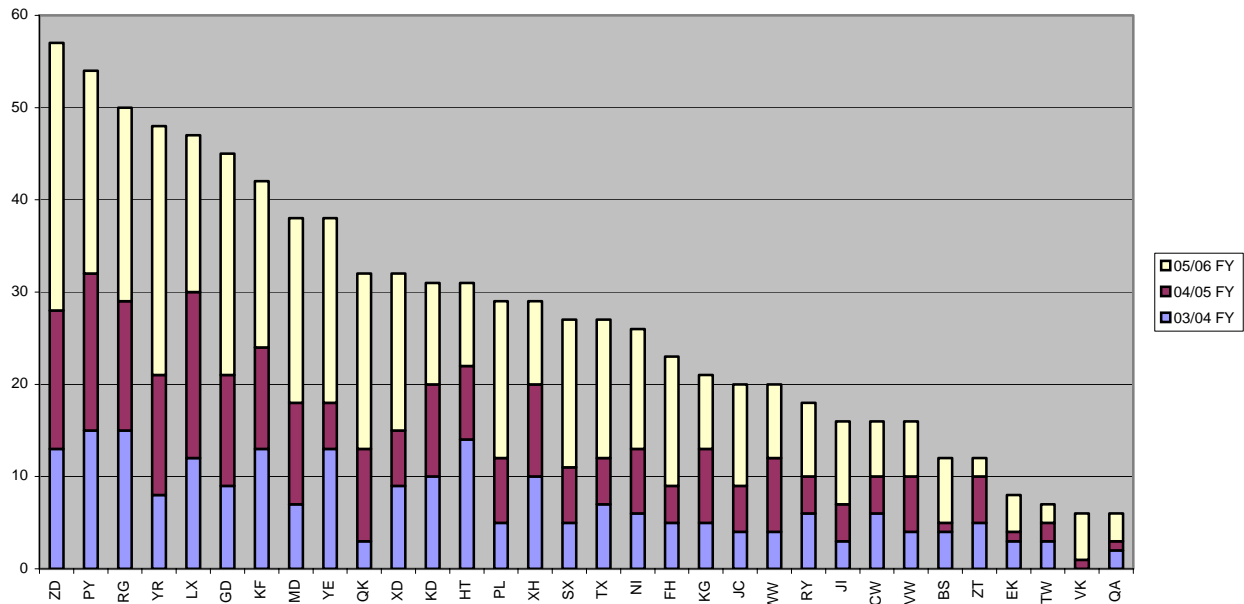


Figure 2: Number of Offences by borough by year

The boroughs represented in the top 6 for the most amount of offences over the 3 year period, also largely make up the top 6 for the most recent financial year 01/04/2005 – 31/03/2006 (with the exception of Lambeth). Information relating to these Boroughs is shown below:

| Borough | 03/04 FY | 04/05 FY | 05/06 FY | Total |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| ZD – Croydon | 13 | 15 | 29 | 57 |
| PY – Bromley | 15 | 17 | 22 | 54 |
| RG – Greenwich | 15 | 14 | 21 | 50 |
| YR – Haringey | 8 | 13 | 27 | 48 |
| LX – Lambeth | 12 | 18 | 17 | 47 |
| GD - Hackney | 9 | 12 | 24 | 45 |



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What offences are responsible?

The main offence type for stealing dogs was Other Theft (56%), Residential Burglary (17%) and Personal Robbery (7%).

The table below shows the offences for the entire period between 01/04/2003 – 31/03/2006:

| Type of Offence | Percentage of All Offences |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Other Theft | 56% |
| Residential Burglary | 17% |
| Personal Robbery | 7% |
| Theft in Dwelling | 5% |
| Theft from MV | 4% |
| Non Residential Burglary | 3% |
| Snatch | 2% |
| All other offences | 5% |

Although the number of offences has gone up, the percentage mix of offences has remained fairly consistent.

Further analysis would need to be done into the 'Other Theft' category to determine if there are any common MO's being used.

Residential burglaries seem to occur when people have advertised dogs (particularly puppies) for sale. This can often result in several dogs (up to 7) being stolen at one time.

Theft in dwellings sometimes occur when several suspects attend a venue to view some puppies, and whilst one distracts the owner, another takes the dog.

People have also been robbed of their dogs, along with dogs being stolen from secure motor vehicles, as well as pet shops.

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**What dogs are being stolen?**

Due to the nature of having to read through every CRIS report to determine what dog has actually been taken the types of dog stolen has only been done for the financial year 01/04/2005 – 31/03/2006.

Over the 12 month period a total of 511 dogs were stolen from 417 offences.

The top 5 dog breeds stolen, and the percentage they make up of the total dogs stolen are shown below:

| Breed of Dog | Total Number Stolen | Number of which are puppies | % of Total Dogs Stolen |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Staffordshire Bull Terrier | 284 | 135 | 56% |
| Rottweiler | 23 | 15 | 5% |
| German Shepherd | 19 | 5 | 4% |
| Cocker Spaniel | 11 | 0 | 2% |
| Jack Russell | 11 | 2 | 2% |

It is clear that Staffordshire Bull Terriers are by far the most stolen dog in the Metropolitan Police area.

48% of these were puppies.

More research would need to be done in order to identify why this breed in particular is being stolen. It would be helpful to establish how much they are worth, as puppies, and as adult dogs.

A dog website describes the Staffordshire Bull Terrier as being;

- exceedingly protective of their family and make excellent guardians and watchdogs
- and excelling in agility and obedience

(source <http://www.nextdaypets.com/directory/breeds/1100257/>)

These factors along with the information from the earlier section (page 4) on “Are dogs being used in crime” section would suggest that some Staffordshire Bull Terriers could be used to commit crime.

There is the possibility that such dogs could be used by criminals such as drug dealers or stolen property handlers to protect their criminal assets at various locations including homes, outbuildings, or cars.



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3) How many dogs have been seized under the Dangerous Dogs Act?

Dangerous Dog Offences

For the period 01/10/2005 – 31/03/2006 there were 354 dangerous dog offences, where dogs have attacked people.

65 of these lead to people being shown as responsible for the dog (18%).

122 of the 354 offences were thought to have involved Staffordshire Bull Terriers (34%), with 23 of these leading to people being shown as responsible (19%).

Number of Dogs Seized

For the 6 month period mentioned above 16 were seized under the dangerous dogs act, with 2 being Staffordshire Bull Terriers.

For the previous 6 month period between 01/04/2005 – 30/09/2005, 31 dogs were seized, with 8 being Staffordshire Bull Terriers.

For clarification purposes a Staffordshire Bull Terrier shown is below:

