

Road Traffic Injuries in Dogs

**A.M.R. Bandara¹, K. Bhaheerathan¹, U.D. Ramanayake², D.D.N. de Silva¹, and
A. Dangolla¹**

*¹Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, Faculty of
Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, University of Peradeniya*

²Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya

Road Traffic Injuries (RTI) leading to death or permanent disability is a major concern to people in Sri Lanka. Increasing number of vehicles and reckless driving are the main causes for escalating number of road accidents in Sri Lanka. Approximately 6,000 RTIs are reported annually with 2000 fatalities. In human RTIs, all road users including drivers, riders, commuters, vendors and pedestrians are equally vulnerable but when animals are considered, only "pedestrian animals" are involved. Studies on RTIs in animals will help to formulate mitigation measures to minimise injuries and fatalities. This will ensure preservation of life, curb animal nuisance on roads, and in the long run, promote responsible animal/pet ownership.

RTIs in animals, are usually in the "hit and run" category with occasional injury to humans and/ or vehicles. The animal with RTI suffers and the owner must go through the mental agony and financial burden of the treatment. This communication summarises all RTI cases in dogs reported to VTH during a 24 month period in 2009 and 2010, which were subjected to detail analysis to identify patterns and causes.

A total of 234 dogs with RTI (116 in 2009 and 118 in 2010) were studied. Among them, 18% succumbed to injuries and 28% were permanently disabled. Majority (61% in 2009 and 51% in 2010) were reported in the morning which may be a result of rush hour and the habit of owners unleashing their pets after dawn. The relatively higher proportion of males involved (68% and 59%, in 2009 and 2010 respectively) may be due to habits of maintaining larger territories compared to females, which makes them vulnerable to accidents. Sexually mature animals are more prone to RTI obviously due to their social behaviour especially when females are in oestrus. The higher frequency of RTI during festival months, namely April (17% in 2009 and 19% in 2010) and December (16% in 2009 and 18% in 2010), may be attributed to increased use of vehicles and/ or drivers being under the influence of alcohol, which could disturb their alertness and vision. A substantial proportion of animals brought for treatment by their respective owners, shows that the RTIs could be prevented if responsible pet ownership is emphasised.