



INJURY BULLETIN

QUEENSLAND INJURY
SURVEILLANCE & PREVENTION
PROJECT

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This Month...

- We look at **Occupational Injuries** as a result of mustering;
- **Season Watch** examines injuries from heaters;
- **Dog bites** are discussed;
- We cover injuries to **people aged 65 years and over**; and
- We provide an **overview** of the injury problem based on six years of QISSP data.

Mustering Injuries in North Western Queensland

- Owen Allen
Physiotherapist
Atherton Hospital

The large sparsely populated shires of Etheridge and Croydon are the western-most boundary of the Peninsular and Torres Strait Regional Health Authority. Beef cattle and gold mining are the major industries in these shires. The terrain is rugged open forest, with large numbers of termite mounds.

Mustering of beef cattle begins in April. The first muster finishes in July and after about a month, a second muster is undertaken. Helicopters are used to flush cattle into more accessible country where stockhands on horseback or motorbike complete the muster.

Due to the terrain, the anthills and the matadorial nature of the mustering, injury is common among the stockhands.

In the four months between March and June, 1994, nine stockhands (1% of the population) were seen with injuries sustained when they rode their motorbike into an anthill. Injuries sustained included hemarthrosis of the first metatarsophalangeal joint of the foot and general contusion, recurrence of discogenic lesion of the lumbar spine, shoulder sprain and haematoma of the lower leg. One dislocation of patella occurred when a horse rider hit his knee against a tree. One sprained knee occurred during a fall from a horse. Two back injuries were caused by direct blows from steers while yarding cattle on foot.

In Bulletin No. 25 (June 1994), QISSP reported 7 spinal cord injuries from falls from horses and two from charges by bulls. Fortunately none of the mustering injuries seen in the Croydon-Etheridge district were severe. However as the above data demonstrates, injury seems to be an inevitable part of this occupation. □

INJURIES FROM HEATERS



As the cooler months of winter come to an end, we focus on injuries caused by heaters. Over a six year period from 1/1/88 to 31/12/93, QISPP recorded 111 injuries associated with heaters.

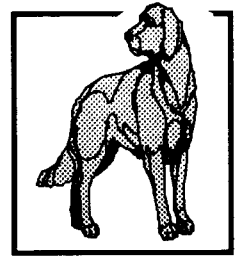
Children aged from 0 to 5 years accounted for nearly one third of injury presentations, with 1 to 2 year olds (18% of cases) being the age group most at risk from injuries associated with heaters. As expected, over 50% of injuries occurred in the cooler months (June, July and August).

The commonest injury was burns accounting for over 55% of cases, with 20% of all heater injuries being burns to the hand and fingers. Cuts and lacerations accounted for 28% of injuries. Other injuries reported included fractures and bruising, each accounting for 7% of injuries associated with heaters.

The scenarios for burn injuries included coming into direct contact with the heater in operation (32 cases), exposure to excessive radiant heat (2 cases), or exposure to flame (14 cases). Of the 14 cases exposed to flame, 7 reported clothing, bedding or carpet caught fire, often when sleeping too close to the heater, and 7 cases were exposed to flame when lighting the heater (five were gas heaters, one was a pot belly stove where petrol was used and one was a kerosene heater).

The majority of accidents occurred in a residential setting (88% of cases), while 11 people reported they were injured at work. □

DOG BITES



The Courier Mail reported a savage dog attack on a Townsville woman earlier this week (31.8.93). The woman is a councillor who has been actively campaigning to prevent packs of dogs attacking pet animals.

The councillor was attacked by a neighbour's three bull terrier-cross dogs while collecting the morning paper outside her home. She was taken to hospital with deep wounds to her stomach, side and back.

The QISPP database contains 2,064 cases of dog bites recorded during the period 1/1/88 to 30/6/94 - an average of 26 hospital presentations per month in Brisbane South.

438 of these cases were children under the age of 10 and the majority of these occurred while the children were playing with the dog.

Half of all dog bites occurred on the weekends and 58% occurred in residential settings. 152 people were on the job at the time of their injury, including tradesmen, police and street vendors.

QISPP contacted Tony Allen, Occupational Health and Safety Officer with Australia Post, to discuss the dog bite problem. Mr Allen said that approximately two postmen were injured per week in incidents where a dog was a contributing factor. These incidents included bites and loss of control of a motor cycle where a dog was unrestrained.

If a particular dog is a contributing factor in an incident involving a postman, Australia Post will contact the relevant council and a warning to restrain the dog will be issued. Mr Allen said that in over half the cases where a dog bites a postman and causes injury, the owners elected to hand their dog over to local authorities to avoid further action being taken. □

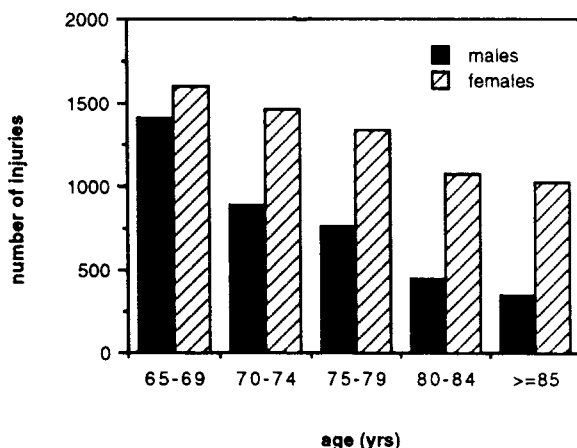
INJURIES TO PEOPLE AGED 65 YEARS AND OVER

Injury to older people is well recognised as a priority area for injury prevention. In this bulletin QISPP examines data on injuries to persons aged 65 years and over.

In a six year period from 1/1/88 to 31/12/93, QISPP recorded 10,368 cases of injury to persons aged 65 years and over. This figure represents 5% of all injuries on the QISPP database for this period and 7% of injuries to adults of 15 years and over.

The age and sex distribution of these injuries is shown below in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1: AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF INJURIES TO OLDER PEOPLE



Almost two-thirds (63%) of these injured people were females. The proportion of females in this age group in Brisbane South is estimated to be 58% (ABS, 30.6.90).

The most common location for injury occurrence was in a residential location (68% of cases), with 57% of all injuries in this age group occurring in the person's own home. The next most common location for injury occurrence was

areas used for transport, accounting for 18% of cases.

Falls were the major cause of injury among older people, with 57% of injuries to persons aged 65 and over, the result of slips, trips or falls.

Road traffic accidents were the cause of injury in 7% of older people. QISPP data showed that of the 776 persons injured in road traffic accidents, 78% were occupants of motor vehicles (half of these were drivers) and 16% were pedestrians.

Injuries suffered by older people were more likely to have a serious outcome, with an admission rate of 28% compared with a 12% injury admission rate for all adults (aged 15 or over) on the QISPP database during this period.

Most of the injuries were non-intentional; 1% of injuries were related to violence and 0.5% were the result of intended self harm.

Fractures accounted for 39% of the injuries, with the most common fracture site being the hip or femur (nearly a quarter of all fractures). Other frequently occurring fracture sites were the humerus, wrist and ribs. Lacerations accounted for 25% of presentations, while bruising (14% of cases) and sprains (11% of cases) were other common injuries. □



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**OVERVIEW - QISPP DATA 1/1/88
- 31/12/93 N = 213,955**

Admissions, deaths and transfers 13%

Children < 15 yrs 29%

Adults > = 15 yrs 71%

Adults > = 60 yrs 7%

Home 42%

Falls 26%

Motor vehicle and road traffic
accident victims (pedestrian, bike,
motor car accident, motor vehicle
accident) 9%

Sport 13%

Occupational 18%

Violence-related 6%

Intended self-harm 1%

Burns 3%

Fractures 19%

Poisoning 2%

Concussion 3%

Head/neck 25%

Eyes 7%

Rural - Central West Region 1 in 17 p.a.

Metro - Brisbane South Region 1 in 30 p.a.

Vehicles 5%

Football 5%

Playground equipment 1.4%

Nursery furniture 0.3%

• The next meeting of the Injury Coalition will be held on Tuesday 4th of October in the Boardroom, Level 3, Mater Adult Hospital from 2 pm to 4 pm. Mark King from the Transport and Road Safety Division, Queensland Transport, will give a 10 minute address on 'Current Road Safety Initiatives of Queensland Transport'.

• QISPP and the University of Queensland Department of Child Health are pleased to present

'Preventing Playground Injury in Children: The Way Forward'

This one day seminar will explore playground equipment injuries to children, issues of design and maintenance and injury prevention. Guest speakers include Professor Jo Sibert from Cardiff, Wales and Dr David Chalmers, Deputy Director of the Injury Prevention Research Unit, Dunedin, New Zealand.

When: Friday, October 28 1994,
commencing at 9 am
Where: 1st Floor Lecture Room,
Department of Child Health,
Bramston Terrace,
Herston
Registration: \$45 which includes lunch and
morning and afternoon tea
Parking: Royal Brisbane Hospital
carpark

This seminar has been made possible by grants from the Health Advancement Branch of Queensland Health and the Department of Education. □