

Dog Bite Prevention, What to do when a strange dog approaches

- Activity: Wolf Arrow Point Elective 14b - what to do when you meet a strange dog.
- Activity: Wolf Arrow Point Elective 14d - rabies, rabid animals.

In the United States, dogs bite more than 4.7 million people a year, and key experts believe that public education can help prevent these bites. As many as 800,000 people, more than half of them children, require medical attention for dog bites each year and more than a dozen people die each year from dog bite injuries. Dog bites are a largely preventable public health problem, and adults and children can learn to reduce their chances of being bitten.

Why Might a Dog Bite?

- **Over Excitement:** Sometimes dogs get overexcited! If you are teasing a dog, or playing roughly, he may snap or bite. Always play gently, making sure that the dog is enjoying it.
- **Protection:** Often, dogs are trying to protect something when they bite. Remember dogs are pack animals. Dogs feel very protective of their family, house, and personal belongings. They often protect their families, yards, and especially food!
- **Fear:** Like many people, dogs sometimes get startled. Be careful not to approach them when they are asleep. Do not make loud noises or quick gestures, or even come up behind them without them knowing it.
- **Illness/Rabies:** Dogs may bite when they are sick or hurt. If a dog is bitten by a sick animal (another dog, a raccoon, coyote, bat, foxes, skunk, etc.) They do not know if we are trying to help them or hurt them. Always call an adult to examine a sick or injured dog, even if it is your own dog.

While on the subject of illness, let's discuss a special illness - rabies. Rabies is a deadly virus that affects the nervous system. If left untreated, a rabid mammal (mammal with rabies) will die, so immediate medical treatment is required. All warm blooded animals - dogs, cats, raccoons, bats, skunks, coyotes, even humans - can contract rabies by being bitten, coming into contact with mucous membrane (nose, eyes, mouth), scratched or by licking an open wound by an animal with rabies. Rabies is most often carried by raccoons, bats, skunks and foxes, who might scratch or bite us or our dogs and cats. How can you tell if an animal has rabies? Animals with rabies often act strangely. For example, raccoons are night creatures if you see a raccoon during the day then something is wrong. Rabid dogs or cats may scratch or act aggressive for no apparent reason. Remember the movie 'Old Yeller'? Rabid wild animals may be less fearful of humans, walk clumsy, or act aggressive. Rabies can be prevented and treated by vaccination, protecting

ourselves and our pets from other animals, and keeping a safe distance from wild animals (both alive and dead) . If you or your pets are bitten or come into contact with a sick animal tell your parents immediately; they will wash any wound with soap and water and obtain medical help for you. For more information on rabies, click on the following

<http://www.ncagr.com/vet/Rabies.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/>

- **Possessiveness:** Even friendly dogs may not want to share their own special things, including food, bones, or even a favorite toy!
- **Accidents Happen:** Many people are bitten by dogs when trying to break up a dog fight. NEVER try to separate two fighting dogs!

Preventing Your Dog from Biting

There is no way to guarantee that your dog will never bite someone. However, you can reduce the risk:

- **Get your puppy from a responsible breeder. Avoid pet shops that use puppy mills.** Your puppy need time, at least 8 weeks, to learn and play with his/her family, so please do not adopt your puppy before then. Have your veterinarian check your puppy.
- **Be aware that some breeds are more aggressive than others.** Select a breed that is right for your family and lifestyle.
- **Spay or neuter your pet.** Sterilization will not only reduce aggression but will also decrease a dog's tendency to roam. However, spaying/neutering won't reduce a dog's protectiveness.
- **Train and socialize your pet.** Set appropriate limits on acceptable behavior, you are the Alpha (leader) dog of his family! Help your dog become a trustworthy member of your family and community. Train your dog to obey basic commands: "stay", "sit", and "come". Protect your dog from teasing and abuse.
- **Teach your dog appropriate behavior.** Don't play aggressive games with your dog such as wrestling, tug of war, or "sicking" your dog on another person. It's essential that your dog recognize you and all the members of your family--including young children--as dominant and not challenge your leadership.
- **Be a kind, responsible pet owner.** License and vaccinate your dog. Follow the leash laws, for everyone's safety don't allow him/her to roam. Make sure your pet has proper food, water, and shelter. Make your pet a member of your family. Dogs that spend too much time in the doghouse or tied in the backyard have a much greater chance of developing behavioral problems such as aggression. Dogs that are well socialized are much less likely to bite.

- **Be cautious.** Look for the warning signs. If your dog is sick, take him to the veterinarian. A dog may display aggressive signs before an attack such as barking, growling, disobeying commands or showing dominance. He/she should be removed from the situation immediately upon displaying any such behavior. If your dog is generally nervous around strangers do not expose him/her to social situations until proper training can take place.

How to Avoid Being Bitten

- Any dog can bite you, even your own dog. Leave alone ANY dog that growls at you, backs away from you, lifts its lips (shows teeth), flattens its ears against its head, raises the hair on its back, or otherwise acts strange, aggressive, or sick. The dog is telling you to "Get away from me. I don't want you near me. Leave me alone." Listen to that warning.
- Never approach a strange dog, particularly one who's confined or restrained. If the strange dog needs help, get the owner, your parents, a policeman, or other adult to provide that help.
- IF APPROACHED BY A STRANGE DOG, STAND LIKE A TREE WITH ARMS AT YOUR SIDES. DO NOT MAKE LOUD SOUNDS. Avoid direct eye contact with the dog. Staring into a dog's eyes is perceived by the dog as an act of aggression and dominance and will only challenge the dog to attack. You want to be looking at the dog's feet.
- Always assume that a strange dog may see you as an intruder or a threat. You want to be uninteresting and unthreatening to the dog as possible.
- Don't pet a dog, even your own, without letting him/her see and sniff you first. If you allow a dog to sniff you, in most cases the dog will leave when he/she decides you aren't a threat. If you see a dog with his owner, always ask permission before you pet the dog.
- Avoid running past a dog or turning your back on a dog and running away. A dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch fleeing prey.
- Don't disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- If you believe a dog is about to attack you, try to place something between yourself and the dog, such as a backpack or a bicycle.
- If you fall or are knocked down, curl into a ball with your face to the ground and put your hands, with fists closed, over your ears. STAY STILL. You want to protect your head and neck.
- Never leave an infant or young child alone with any dog, not even yours!
- Never try to separate two fighting dogs.
- Other animals can bite or carry diseases. Stay away from wild animals. Do not touch dead animals.

Dogs we should always leave alone unless we have special permission

Some dogs work at very important jobs. Seeing Eye dogs are literally the eyes for their blind owners and should not be distracted from their duties. Similarly, police dogs and Search and Rescue dogs are busy protecting us and should not be distracted from their work.

What to do if you are bitten

- Wash the wound with soap and water and immediately get medical help.
- Remember what animal bit you as well as time and location. The police need a description to locate that animal so that no one else is bitten.

References:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/biteprevention.htm>

<http://www.ncagr.com/vet/Rabies.htm>

http://www.plasticsurgery.org/news_room/press_releases/Take-a-Bite-Out-of-Dog-Attacks.cfm

http://www.lee-county.com/animalservices/safety_around_animals.htm

<http://www.petnet.com.au/dogsnkids/4.html>

<http://www.oregonhumane.org/petownered/dogbites.asp>

<http://www.life4paws.org/sevenrules.htm>