

With over 70 million dogs living in US households there is no doubt that we love our dogs. But dogs are not people and every year, more than 4.5 million Americans are bitten by dogs resulting in over 800,000 needing medical attention according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and more than half of all victims are children who are also more likely to be severely injured. Most dog bites affecting young children occur during everyday activities and while interacting with familiar dogs. With that in mind – next week is National Dog Bite Awareness Week!

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association dog bites accounted for more than one-third of all homeowners' insurance liability claim dollars paid out in 2017, at a cost of over \$700 million. The average claim for a dog bite injury in 2016 was \$33,230 & there were nearly 29,000 reconstructive procedures in 2016 to repair injuries caused by dog bites, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. The U.S. Postal Service reports that 6,755 postal employees were attacked by dogs in 2016.

Dog owners should review these helpful tips below and always be aware of their surroundings when they are with their dogs. Taking precautions to ensure safety for all involved is the best way to reduce the risk for dog bite accidents.

DOG BITE EMERGENCIES

- If you are bitten, here is a checklist of things you should do:
- If the dog's owner is present, request proof of rabies vaccination, and get the owner's name and contact information.
- Clean the bite wound with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Consult your doctor immediately or go to the emergency room if it's after office hours.
- Contact the dog's veterinarian to check vaccination records.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

- Be cautious around strange dogs, and treat your dog with respect.
- Because children are the most common victims of dog bites, parents and caregivers should:
- NEVER leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Be alert for potentially dangerous situations.
- Teach children - including toddlers - to be careful around pets.
- Children must learn not to approach strange dogs or try to pet dogs through fences.
- Teach children to ask permission from the dog's owner before petting the dog.

WHAT'S A DOG OWNER TO DO?

- Carefully select your pet. Puppies should not be obtained on impulse.
- Make sure your pet is socialized as a young puppy so it feels at ease around people and other animals.
- Don't put your dog in a position where it feels threatened or teased.
- Be calm. Always talk in a quiet voice or whisper -- no shouting -- and take a "time out" if you feel angry or frustrated.
- Train your dog. Basic commands help dogs understand what is expected of them and help build a bond of trust between pets and people.
- Walk and exercise your dog regularly to keep it healthy and provide mental stimulation.
- Avoid highly excitable games like wrestling or tug of war.
- Use a leash in public to ensure you are able to control your dog.
- Keep your dog healthy.
- Have your dog vaccinated against rabies and other preventable infectious diseases.

- Parasite control and other health care are important because how your dog feels affects how it behaves.
- If you have a fenced yard, make sure your gates are secure.
- Neuter your pet. According to the National Canine Research Foundation, approximately 92 percent of fatal dog attacks involved male dogs, 94 percent of which were not neutered.