



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

Marion County Animal Services

5701 S.E. 66th St., Ocala, FL 34480
www.marioncountyfl.org/animalcenter.htm
Animal Center (352)671-8700 ~ Animal Control (352)671-8727



5/15/2009

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Christy Jergens
352-671-8707
christy.jergens@marioncountyfl.org

ANIMAL SERVICES CELEBRATES NATIONAL DOG BITE PREVENTION WEEK

OCALA, Fla. — By age 12, 50 percent of all children in the U.S. will have been bitten by a dog. Most of these bites aren't caused by dogs the children don't know, however; they are from dogs owned by family, friends and neighbors. Marion County Animal Services is celebrating National Dog Bite Prevention Week from May 17-23 and is issuing the following guidelines to raise awareness and understanding of dog behavior and to prevent future dog bites.

Dogs typically bite because of fear or aggression. If people perform an action that a dog interprets as possibly harming one of its loved ones or taking one of its possessions, a dog may act out and bite. It's important to leave the dog alone and not try to pet it or move it if the dog is:

- behind its fence or in its owner's vehicle
- eating, sleeping, chewing on a toy or caring for puppies
- hiding because of inclement weather
- loose or without its owner

At times, someone may be out in the community and may approach or be approached by a dog. This also serves as a time when people should be very aware of what's going on.

- Never approach an animal that doesn't have its owner with it.
- When meeting another owned dog, first ask the animal owner if it is okay to pet the animal. If the owner says it's alright, slowly reach out your hand and let the dog smell it. If the dog acts happy or nonchalant, it is okay to pet it. However, do not pet the dog around its face or mouth—that is the danger zone for bites; pet the animal on its side instead.
- If a stray dog approaches you, do not run. Stand still (like a tree) with your arms hanging down, and don't look the dog in the eye. Dogs view looking in the eyes as a challenge.
 - If the dog becomes disinterested, slowly back away while checking to see if the dog is following.
 - If the dog acts aggressively, try to put something in front of you so the dog will bite it instead of you.
 - If a dog knocks you down, curl up in a ball and lie still. Make your hands into fists and cover your ears. The dog will likely sniff you and leave.

Whether at home or away, there are things that you can do to lessen the chance of your dog biting you or someone else.

- Train your animal early on that it's not okay to bite.
- Spay or neuter your dog.
- Make sure your animal is obedience trained.
- Don't play roughly with your pet.
- Never tease or chase dogs.

It's important to note that all breeds and sizes of dogs can bite. While people often associate dog bites with bigger dog breeds, some of the most aggressive breeds are smaller dogs. In a recent report published by the London Telegraph, dachshunds are the most aggressive dog breed. According to the article, one in five has tried to bite strangers, and one in 12 has snapped at his owner. Number two and three on the most aggressive list were Chihuahuas and Jack Russell Terriers.

A final note on bites, if an animal bites and it is not current on its rabies vaccination, it will have to undergo a 10-day mandatory quarantine period. Make sure that you keep your dog and your family protected by ensuring that your dog has a current rabies vaccination.

Marion County Animal Services' mission is to protect public safety through the enforcement of animal control regulations and to improve the quality of life for Marion County residents and their pets through education relating to responsible pet ownership. To find out more information about Marion County Animal Services, please visit our facility located at 5701 S.E. 66th St. in Ocala along Baseline Road, or visit us online at www.marioncountyfl.org/animalcenter.htm.

###