



Dog Bites: More Common Than You'd Think

by Susan Bury

Ask a group of kids in Carbon County whether any have been bitten by a dog and a surprisingly large number will raise their hands. That's been the experience of the Beartooth Humane Alliance (BHA) when our volunteers have presented dog-bite prevention programs in area schools.

Each year, there are about 4.7 million reported dog bites in America. *Many more bites go unreported.* Almost half of those bitten are children under the age of 12, often by dogs with whom the child is familiar. The Carbon County health nurse reports 12 dog bites in each of the last two years, but apparently many more bites are happening in our communities.

BHA offers these reminders to help keep people safe from dog bites:

- Any dog may bite if it is teased, hit or abused. Dogs, just like people, need to be treated with respect and understanding. Respect a dog's space. Never disturb a dog who is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- Never leave young children alone with dogs. As soon as children are old enough, teach them how to avoid dog bites.
- Never approach or try to pet an unfamiliar dog, especially a dog that is tied or confined. When you are around an unfamiliar dog, avoid movements that will startle it.
- If you want to pet someone else's dog, ask the owner first. If the owner says yes, then allow the dog to sniff your hand before you pet it.
- Know what a potentially dangerous dog looks like: barking, growling, snarling, ears laid flat, legs stiff, tail up, and hair standing up.
- If you feel threatened by a dog, don't scream or run. Put your hands in your pockets. Don't look the dog in the eyes. Stay still until the dog moves away and then back away slowly until the dog is out of sight.
- Never get in the middle of two dogs fighting.

To be a responsible dog owner:

- Spay or neuter your dog. Dogs who have *not* been spayed or neutered are much more likely to bite than dogs who *have* been spayed or neutered.
- Make sure your dog has its rabies shots. Keep your vaccination record on hand.
- When delivery people come to your home, keep your dog away from them. Your dog's instinct is to protect the family.
- Don't leave your dog tied to a tree or confined outside unattended. These conditions can cause a dog to become frustrated and aggressive.
- Consider obedience training for your dog, which will teach your dog proper behavior and help you understand your dog's natural behavior.
- Keep your dog under proper control.

BHA's dog-bite prevention programs for schools are led by Carla Prinkki and her dog Sonny, a registered Delta Society Pet Partner team, certified to work in animal-assisted activities and therapy. To schedule a dog-bite prevention presentation, call BHA at 672-6960.