

## **Despite Perceptions, Dog Bites on the Decline -- National Dog Bite Prevention Week.**

*In the last ten years, contrary to much-publicized estimates of the number of dog bites in the United States, the nation has seen stunning decreases in the actual number of reported dog bites. Dog safety education programs, better understanding of canine behavior, increased awareness of the importance of spaying and neutering animals, and the creation and enforcement of leash laws have contributed to this decline.*

([PRWeb](#)) May 20, 2008 -- Continuing research by the National Canine Research Council has revealed that, contrary to much-publicized estimates of the number of dog bites in the United States, the actual numbers of reported dog bites across the country have been falling over the past three decades. In the last ten years, in particular, America has seen stunning decreases in reported dog bites, Dog safety education programs, better understanding of canine behavior, increased awareness of the importance of spaying and neutering animals, and the creation and enforcement of leash laws have contributed to this decline.

Metropolitan areas across the nation, from Philadelphia to Minneapolis to Los Angeles, have experienced drastic decreases in the number of reported dog bites. Chicago has seen a substantial drop in dog bites, from almost 12,000 reported cases in 1978 to about 2,000 cases in 2007. New York City, which recorded over 30,000 dog bites per year in the 1970's, reported fewer than 6,000 per year for each of the past seven years.

Even postal workers, who have high rates of exposure to unfamiliar dogs, have enjoyed a new level of safety around dogs. Nationally, about 3,200 mail carriers reported being bitten by dogs in 2006, a significant reduction from 6,708 reports in 1973.

Much of this is the result of increased recognition that humane treatment can effectively reduce canine aggression, of increased awareness of the importance of spaying and neutering animals, of the implementation of dog safety awareness programs, and of the enactment and enforcement of leash laws.

The vast majority of reported dog bites are minor incidents, categorized by medical caregivers as "fast healing, no lasting impairment."

There are still, unfortunately, some cases of serious, severe, and on the rarest of occasions, fatal injuries associated with dogs. The real tragedy, according to Karen Delise, Founder and Director of Research for the National Canine Research Council, is that in the majority of serious bites, the incidents were largely preventable.

National Dog Bite Prevention Week offers an opportunity for us to acknowledge the many ways in which dogs enrich our lives, and to remind ourselves that humane care and control of dogs will continue us in the encouraging direction of fewer dog bites.

Communities can take the following steps to help keep both people and dogs out of harm's way:

- Encourage dog owners to spay and neuter all dogs that are not used in an appropriate and legitimate breeding program.
- Encourage the enforcement of leash laws.
- Encourage humane containment of dogs and discourage tethering and chaining of dogs.
- Actively penalize animal abusers and enforce anti-cruelty laws.

Individuals, parents and dog owners should follow these common-sense guidelines:

- Young children should never be left alone with unfamiliar dogs.
- Children should be taught to be respectful towards all dogs.
- Children should be taught how to respond in the event that they encounter unfamiliar dogs, such as:
  - o Remain calm and quiet.
  - o "Be like a tree" - stand still with your arms at your sides.
  - o Do not approach or attempt to pet or handle unfamiliar dogs.
  - o Always ask the owner if it is OK before approaching a leashed dog

Dogs are thinking, feeling animals that may react negatively to many of the same stresses that humans experience: fear, pain, frustration, loneliness, hunger, and thirst. Dogs can also be protective of their possessions in much the same way humans are. Dogs may defend or protect their territory, their offspring, and their "property", such as toys, bones, and food bowls.

Human beings enjoy an incredible relationship with dogs; no other species is so inexorably intertwined with human existence. And while people and dogs don't always understand each other, the true wonder of dogs is that they are so amiable and accepting in the face of what are, to them, our many strange behaviors.

"Whether working as guides, assistants, farm hands, or police partners, entertaining us with their athletic ability, or enhancing our physical and emotional well-being through simple companionship, dogs give us much more than they could ever take away", says Delise. "It is our responsibility to humanely care for and control them. By doing so, we will continue to live safely with dogs and enjoy them for the wonderful companions that they are."

About Karen Delise/the National Canine Research Council:

Karen Delise is the Founder and Director of Research for the National Canine Research Council and the author of "The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression". (Anubis Publishing) She can be reached at [kdelise @ nrcouncil.com](mailto:kdelise@nrcouncil.com).

The National Canine Research Council is the leading source of accurate information on dog attacks, publishing well-documented, reliable research to improve the lives of dogs and the communities in which they live.



On the web at: [www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com](http://www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com)

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