



Pointers For Parents

Tips On Keeping Children Safer Around Dogs

(NAPSA)—Those who don't believe dog bites pose a serious problem in the U.S. are barking up the wrong tree.

Consider the following:

- An estimated 4.7 million dog bites occur in the U.S. each year.
- Nearly 800,000 of those bites require medical care.
- The insurance industry pays more than \$1 billion in dog-bite claims each year.

Fortunately, there are steps that parents can take to reduce the risk of problems when children and dogs interact.

The first is to educate their children and supervise them when they are around dogs. Studies have found that the No. 1 dog-bite prevention measure is education. Children who understand how to act around dogs, how to play with dogs, when to leave dogs alone and how to properly meet a dog are much less likely to be bitten.

What can parents do?

To help parents supervise their children when around dogs, here are some safe rules of behavior for kids, suggested by the Accident Attorneys Organization:

- Don't treat a dog unkindly.
- Never hit, kick, slap or bite a dog or pull on his ears, tail or paws.
- Don't bother a dog when she is busy.
- Never bother dogs with puppies or dogs that are playing with or guarding toys, eating or sleeping. Always leave service dogs alone while they are working.
- Don't approach a dog you don't know.
- Never approach a dog that is tied up, behind a fence or in a car.

Always make slow movements, set things down carefully and don't run when you're around



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dogs, as this gets them excited and they may accidentally hurt you.

What can dog owners do?

Here are some tips for dog owners that can help to reduce the risk of problems:

- Supervise your dog.

Dogs left on their own may feel uncertain and defensive, or even overly confident, and this poses risks to your dog, as well as to other people and dogs.

- Train and socialize your dog.

Be sure your dog interacts with and has good manners around all members of the family, the public and other animals. Basic training is as important for the owner as it is for the dog, and socialization is the key to a well-adjusted adult dog.

The Accident Attorneys Organization has created a downloadable safety guide for dog owners and parents. It also explains the laws governing dog bites. For a copy, visit www.accidentattorneys.org.