

Responsible Pet Ownership Takes Bite Out of Dog Attacks

Pembroke Pines FL --- Today a Miami letter carrier was viciously attacked by a pitbull. Responsible pet ownership could have prevented this tragedy.

News reports are filled with stories of children, adults --- and even other animals --- who have been injured, or even killed, in vicious animal attacks. Did you know that nationwide about 4.5 million people are bitten each year? And almost one in five of those who are bitten, a total of 885,000 individuals, require medical attention for dog bite-related injuries.

Contrary to what cartoonists and comedians might think about dogs and the letter carrier, children in the United States are the most frequent victims of dog bites and attacks. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Humane Society of the United States, small children, the elderly, and U.S. Postal Service letter carriers --- in that order --- are the most frequent victims of dog bites and attacks. The public needs to be aware that municipalities are enacting stronger laws to keep citizens safe from attacks.

While some attribute attacks on letter carriers to dogs' inbred aversion to uniforms, experts say the psychology actually runs much deeper. Every day that a letter carrier comes into a dog's territory, the dog barks and the letter carrier leaves. Day after day the dog sees this action repeated. After a week or two, the dog appears to feel invincible against intruders. Once the dog gets loose, there's a good chance it will attack.

Many of us are dog owners. You may feel confident that your dog won't bite. But if your trusted companion *does* attack or bite someone, consider your liability for the victim's pain, suffering, and medical expenses. While the U.S. Postal Service is committed to providing consistent, reliable service to its customers, as an employer, the well-being and safety of its employees is paramount. Did you know that a loose dog roaming the neighborhood or a dog threatening from its own yard could lead to the temporary curtailment of mail delivery.

Dog Bite Prevention Tips for Letter Carriers and Children

To help make your neighborhood safe for the carrier, yourself, and other people, just remember these simple rules:

1. Find out what time the carrier usually brings your mail.
2. When the carrier is due to visit your house, check to be sure your dog is inside. Keep the dog inside until the letter carrier is gone.

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3. If someone needs to open the door to sign for a letter, first put the dog in another room and close the door.

4. If you have a mail slot, keep your dog away from the slot so the carrier's fingers don't get bitten.
5. If your mailbox is inside your fenced yard, and your dog is too, keep the dog on a leash away from the mailbox during the time your letter carrier delivers the mail.
6. When your dog is outside, never walk up to the letter carrier and ask for your mail. Your dog may think you are being threatened.
7. If you see a dog running loose in your neighborhood, report it to the proper authorities (if you are a child, tell your parents).
8. Never, ever approach a strange dog. Remember: no owner, no petting. Only approach a dog that is on a leash with his owner. And in that case, ask the owner's permission to pet the dog and first let the animal sniff you.
9. When a strange dog comes near you, stand like a tree, or if you are on the ground, curl up your legs, cup your hands over your ears and lay still like a rock!
10. Don't go near a dog that is in a car, behind a fence, or tied up — even if you know him.

How to be a Responsible Pet Owner:

- Teach your dog appropriate behavior. Don't play aggressive games, such as wrestling or tug of war. It's essential that your dog recognizes family members as dominant figures whose authority should not be challenged.
- For everyone's safety, don't allow your dog to roam. Make your pet a member of your family. Dogs that haven't been properly socialized, receive little attention or handling, or are left tied up for long periods of time, frequently turn into biters.
- Stay on the safe side. Help your dog become accustomed to a variety of situations. If you don't know how your dog will react to a new situation, be cautious. If you think your dog could panic in a crowd, leave him or her at home. If your dog may overreact to visitors or delivery people, keep your pet in another room.
- Spay or neuter your dog. Statistics from the Humane Society of the United States reflect that dogs that have not been spayed or neutered are up to three times more likely to be involved in a biting incident than neutered or spayed dogs.

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An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 149 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes, six days a week. It has 34,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services, not tax dollars, to pay for operating expenses. Named the Most Trusted Government Agency five consecutive years by the Ponemon Institute, the Postal Service has annual revenue of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail.

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