

For Immediate Release
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**DOH Officials Collaborate with Agency Partners to Support
National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 20-26**

Tallahassee-- To raise awareness about preventing dog bite injuries in Florida, the Florida DOH is joining with the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Humane Society of the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Postal Service to promote May 20-26 as National Dog Bite Prevention Week.

"Public education plays an important role in reducing the risk of dog bites, particularly with children," said Dr. Carina Blackmore, Florida's State Public Health Veterinarian. "Responsible dog ownership along with dog safety education for children are proven ways to prevent dog bites."

Annually more than 4.7 million Americans, approximately half of them children, suffer dog bite injuries. Many of these injuries are from dogs they know and interact with regularly. Injury rates are highest among children between the ages of five and nine years old, with boys being bitten more often than girls in the same age group. The number of dog bite injuries increases during the months of April through September with the peak occurring in July. According to the CDC, as many as 800,000 people require medical attention for dog bites each year and about a dozen die each year from dog bite injuries.

When you or your child approach an unfamiliar dog, remember to:

- Wait and watch the dog's body language.
- Ask the owner for permission to pet the animal.
- Let the pet sniff you.
- Pet the dog in the direction of his/her fur.

Safety tips for dog owners:

- Before getting a dog, seek the advice of a veterinarian or animal shelter about which dog is right for your family and your lifestyle.
- Spay or neuter your dog.
- Socialize your dog so it feels at ease around people and other animals.
- Don't put your dog in situations where it may feel threatened or teased.
- Follow leash laws. Don't let your dog roam freely.
- Train your dog to consistently obey basic commands such as "stay," "sit," and "come."
- Keep your dog healthy with regular check-ups and a vaccination program tailored to your dog's needs.

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- Make sure your veterinarian vaccinates your dog against rabies with a licensed rabies vaccine.
- See a veterinarian promptly if your dog is sick or injured. Illness and pain can make a dog more likely to bite.
- Don't play aggressive games with your dog.
- Confine your dog in a fenced yard or "dog run" when it is outside.
- Do not leave your dog on a chain for long periods of time. Chained dogs are more likely to bite.

Safety tips for adults and children:

- Never approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Never run from a dog and never scream around a dog.
- If you believe a dog is about to attack you, try to place something between yourself and the dog, such as a backpack or a bicycle.
- If a dog knocks you over, roll into a ball, cover your face and stay still.
- Children should never approach or play with dogs unless supervised by an adult.
- Children should tell an adult if they see a stray dog or a dog acting strangely.
- Don't look a dog right in the eyes.
- Don't disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- Adults should never leave an infant or young child alone with any dog, not even the family pet.

If bitten:

- Seek medical attention immediately.
- Control bleeding and wash the area of the bite with soap and water.
- Report the bite to your local county health department, animal control agency, or police.

For more information visit: www.MyFloridaEH.com ;