

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Dog Bite Prevention Week is May 19-25th**

Every year, about five million people are bitten by dogs (half of these are children) and almost a million of those require medical attention. Medical bills and the emotional damage, especially to children, is incalculable. How can man's best friend be responsible for so much damage?

The main reasons dogs bite are fear (they are cornered and strike out) and protection (dogs feel the need to protect their people or territory). Dogs rarely turn and bite out of aggression unless the behavior has been encouraged or not properly corrected and is now out of control.

If you are faced with an aggressive dog, don't approach fast, make eye contact, stand over the dog, or turn suddenly and run. DO stop, stay still, avoid eye contact and speak gently. If attacked use an article of clothing or object as a shield. If knocked down, get in a fetal position.

Parents should teach kids to always ask permission of the dog's owner before trying to pet a dog. Teach kids that dogs don't like hugs and kisses: hugging and face to face contact are common causes for bites to the face. Kids can scratch the dog on the chest or neck. Tell children to "be like a tree" if a strange dog approaches: trees are boring and the dog will eventually go away.

Have family dogs spayed and neutered: this will make them calmer, healthier, and less likely to be aggressive. Never assume your dog is good with kids. If a toddler must interact with your dog, have your hands on the dog, too. Why take the chance? Take your children with you to dog obedience classes where kids can learn proper training while conditioning the dog to enjoy the presence and actions of the children using positive experiences. Tell kids not to tease a dog or to disturb one that is sleeping, eating, or protecting something. For more information on dog bite prevention, go to [www.doggonesafe.com](http://www.doggonesafe.com).

by M. Kathleen Shaw, DVM

Dr. Shaw is Chair of the VVMA's Media Relations Committee and is a veterinarian from North Bennington.

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*The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 343 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit [www.vtvets.org](http://www.vtvets.org) or call (802) 878-6888.*