



## **Dog Bite Prevention - Be a Responsible Pet Owner**

Owning a pet is a privilege, but the benefits of pet ownership come with responsibilities. Responsible pet ownership builds a solid foundation for dog bite prevention. Your dog is part of your family and wants to be part of family life. But sometimes it's difficult for us to fully understand how a dog sees the world, and providing your dog with a secure resting space and supervision in risky situation is the best way to plan for success.

### **1. Commit**

- Carefully select your dog. Puppies should not be obtained on impulse.
- Select a pet that's suited to your home and lifestyle.
- Keep only the type and number of pets for which you can provide appropriate food, water, shelter, health care and companionship.
- Commit to the relationship for the life of your pet(s).
- Walk and exercise your dog regularly to keep it healthy and provide mental stimulation.
- Make sure your pet is socialized as a young puppy so it feels at ease around people and other animals.
- Never leave a child alone with a dog.
- You need to be with you dog when he or she interacts with unfamiliar people, and don't force people to interact with your dog if they appear reluctant, uninterested or afraid.

### **2. Invest**

- Recognize that pet ownership requires an investment of time and money.
- Make sure your pet receives preventive health care (vaccinations, parasite control, etc.), as well as care for any illnesses or injuries. Parasite control and veterinary care are important because how your dog feels affects how it behaves.
- Budget for potential emergencies.

### **3. Obey**

- Clean up after your pet.
- Obey all local ordinances, including licensing, leash requirements and noise control. Use a leash in public to ensure you are able to control your dog and to show others that you are in control of your dog.
- If you have a fenced yard, make sure the gates and fence are secure. Don't allow your pet to stray or become feral.
- Train your dog. The basic commands "sit," "stay," "no," and "come" help dogs understand what is expected of them.
- Use positive reinforcement with your dog. Use positive training methods to create and foster a relationship with your dog based on mutual trust, respect and love rather than pain, fear and intimidation.

### **4. Identify**

- Make sure your pet is properly identified (i.e., tags, microchips, or tattoos) and keep its registration up-to-date.

### **5. Limit**

- Don't contribute to our nation's pet overpopulation problem: limit your pet's reproduction through spaying/neutering, containment, or managed breeding.
- Avoid highly excitable games like wrestling or tug-of-war.
- Don't put your dog in a position where it feels threatened or teased.

6. Prepare

- Prepare for an emergency or disaster, including assembling an evacuation kit.
- Make alternate arrangements if you can no longer provide care for your pet.
- Recognize any decline in your pet's quality of life and make timely decisions in consultation with a veterinarian.

***Information courtesy of American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)***