

## Dog bite injuries increase in Fla.

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FORT MYERS, Fla.- The Lee County Health Department in partnership with the Animal Services Division of Lee County cautions the public to be wary of potential animal bites, especially from dogs, as it marks National Dog Bite Prevention Week May 15-23, along with a significant increase in dog bite injuries.

Dog bite injuries have more than doubled in 10 years statewide, but in Lee County the dog bite injuries have tripled in the same period, according to state injury statistics. More than 1,000 animal bites occur annually in Lee County, and 75% of them are from dogs.

“All biting mammals can carry the deadly rabies disease,” said Dr. Judith Hartner, Director of the Health Department. Few are confirmed to have the deadly disease, but all victims are recommended to receive rabies treatment because awaiting disease confirmation before beginning treatment may result in the victim’s death.

Although dog bites occur year round, summer is a time when children are out of school and bites increase along with animal rabies cases.

To prevent animal bites and possible rabies infections, follow these simple steps:

- Never approach an unfamiliar dog or wild animal.
  
- Never run from a dog and never scream around a dog.
  
- If you believe an animal is about to attack you, try to place something between yourself and the animal, such as a backpack or a bicycle.
  
- If a dog knocks you over, roll into a ball, cover your face and stay still.
  
- If bitten by any animal seek immediate treatment by a physician.

Contact the Lee County Health Department to report animal bites at (239) 332-9501 and Lee County Domestic Animal Services for more information on dangerous dogs (239) 533-7387 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.