

## **Experts: Number of dog bites rising**

NBC-2/ABC-7 5-18-11, 5-19-11

LEE COUNTY -The number of dog bite cases keeps rising in Southwest Florida. Most of those bites come from family pets. Experts we spoke to explained what you can do to keep your kids safe.

Wednesday, officials with the Lee County Health Department released stats showing dog bites here have tripled in the past three years - now at nearly 1,000 each year.

"Well, the main thing is to be respectful of all animals," said Diane Holm, with the Lee County Health Department.

Most of those bites, Animal Services officials say, come from man's best friend right at home.

Carrie Perk should know. Her son is Lee County's last dog bite fatality. Liam was bitten by their family dog in December 2009.

"Dogs don't like to be hung on and they can bite. And they can bite in 1/40 of a second," she said.

Ever since, the perks have spread the message to other families.

"It's not about getting rid of your dogs. We're just as much dog lovers as everyone else is," Perk said.

Over at K9s Come First Kennel, Sunny Lichtenberg had some advice for moms and dads too.

"You should never let your children wrestle with a dog or play tug with a dog or go near their food," she said.

Trainers say supervision is the key and that you should never let a child alone with a dog - regardless of temperament.

"A wonderfully-stable dog can all of a sudden become fearful and snap," Lichtenberg said.

"He could bite and your child could be its victim," Perk added.

Experts say there are some steps you can follow to prevent bites and possible rabies infections.

- 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.

By Paul Gessler - bio | email