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Teach Your Children Dog Safety

Alexandria, VA—September 1, 2008—As summer turns to fall, our children are preparing to return to school. It is a time for teaching and a time for learning. Take this opportunity to teach your kids how to safe around dogs. According to the Humane Society of the United States, every year, approximately 4.7 million people are bitten by dogs. It is estimated that over half of these bites were sustained by kids under the age of thirteen. Most children love dogs, but they need to love them with caution and respect.

Teach your child that he/she should never approach a dog that is unleashed and unsupervised. If the dog is leashed, they should ask permission of the dog's guardian before approaching or petting the animal.

Since kids can get very excited around a dog, they tend to make quick sudden movements and use a loud voice which can frighten a dog. Encourage your child to move slowly, calmly and quietly when interacting with a dog. Children often want to hug a dog they have just met, but this should be discouraged as it could make the dog feel confined or "trapped" thus making the dog nervous and more likely to react.

There is truth in the old adage "Let sleeping dogs lie". It is never a good idea to bother a sleeping dog. The dog could become startled and snap.

Dogs can be protective of their territory and possessions, being aware of this fact and respecting their space can prevent bites. Never allow a child to approach a dog that is eating or playing with a bone or a toy as this could make the dog feel that he is in danger of losing his possession and that he must defend it. Dogs can also be protective of their area. Never reach over a fence or into a car or cage to pet a dog.

What should your child do if an unsupervised dog approaches them? Become a tree. The child should stand completely still with their arms at their sides. If the dog becomes aggressive, they should drop to the ground and curl into a ball with their face down and their knees pulled up to their chest while covering the back of the neck with their hands.

Never try to outrun a dog. Running from a dog may lead him to believe this is a game and encourage him to chase. The child should simply back away from the dog slowly and calmly. If the dog jumps on the child, they should turn their back to the dog and fold their arms across their chest.

There seems to be a natural attraction between kids and dogs. If you teach your child to be safe and respectful when interacting with a dog, you help foster a relationship that will last a lifetime.