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Contact: Mark Stubis
202-677-4227
marks@americanhumane.org

American Humane Offers Tips to Stay Safe During National Dog Bite Prevention Week® (April 9 -15) and All Year Round

LOS ANGELES, April 6, 2017 – Every year more than 4.5 million Americans, more than half of them children, are bitten by dogs. As part of the National Dog Bite Prevention Week® Coalition, American Humane, the country's first national humane, encourages adults to protect both children and dogs, and learn the importance of pet owner responsibility.

“Dogs are our best friends, providing love, comfort and protection,” says Dr. Robin Ganzert, president and CEO of American Humane. “But it’s up to us humans to be good friends to them as well by protecting everyone around us – ourselves, our kids, and our dogs – from the dangers and consequences of dog bites.”

Dogs can bite for many reasons, including improper care and/or a lack of socialization. All dogs, even well-trained, gentle dogs, are capable of biting however when provoked, especially when eating, sleeping or caring for puppies. Thus, even when a bite is superficial or classified as “provoked,” dogs may be abandoned or euthanized. Therefore, it’s vitally important to keep both children and dogs safe by preventing dog bites wherever possible.

“A dog bite can have a profound effect not only on the victim, but on the dog and the dog’s family, especially if the dog is euthanized, might have to cope with loss for the first time,” said Dr. Mark Nample, veterinarian and Certified Animal Safety Representative for American Humane’s “No Animals Were Harmed®” program. “All dog owners everywhere need to make sure they know the steps they can take to prevent their dog from biting someone.” Speaking at the National Dog Bite Prevention Week Coalition kick-off event in Los Angeles on April 6, Dr. Nample was accompanied by a special guest: Hooch, top winner at the 2016 American Humane Hero Dog Awards, and his owner Zach Skow. Hooch had been badly abused but is gentle and trusting, working with special-needs and autistic children. He serves as an example of how one cannot judge a dog by looks alone and the importance of knowing the proper way to treat as well as behave around dogs.

To reduce the number of injuries to people and the risk of relinquishment of dogs who bite, American Humane offers the following suggestions:

For Children:

- Never approach an unknown dog or a dog that is alone without an owner, and always ask for permission before petting the dog.
- Never approach an injured animal – find an adult who can get the help s/he needs
- Never approach a dog that is eating, sleeping or nursing puppies.
- Don't poke, hit, pull, pinch or tease a dog.

For Dog Owners:

- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog, even if it is a family pet.
- Interactions between children and dogs should always be monitored to ensure the safety of both your child and your dog.
- Teach your children to treat the dog with respect and not to engage in rough or aggressive play.
- Make sure your pet is socialized as a young puppy so it feels at ease around people and other animals.
- Never put your dog in a position where s/he feels threatened.
- Walk and exercise your dog regularly to keep him/her healthy and to provide mental stimulation.
- Use a leash in public to ensure you are able to control your dog.
- Regular veterinary care is essential to maintain your dog's health; a sick or injured dog is more likely to bite.
- Be alert, if someone approaches you and your dog - caution them to wait before petting the dog, give your pet time to be comfortable with a stranger.

American Humane also offers a free online booklet available for families with children called “Pet Meets Baby,” providing valuable information on introducing a new child to a home with a pet – or a new pet into a home with a child: <http://www.americanhumane.org/interaction/programs/humane-education/pet-meets-baby.html>.

Consider these statistics and tips provided by National Dog Bite Prevention Week® Coalition members:

- The American Veterinary Medical Association says that after children, senior citizens are the second most common dog bite victims. During National Dog Bite Prevention Week®, the AVMA highlights the most recent findings in the veterinary behavior field, introduces new educational programs for pet owners of all ages and joins with its coalition partners in urging public to respect and better understand a dog's behavior and urge dog owners to provide a safe, happy environment for both people and dogs. They have provided much useful information at this [link](#).
- State Farm reports that in 2016, it paid nearly \$122 million as a result of 3,660 dog-related injury claims, an increase of 15%. Responsible pet ownership and educating children about how to safely interact with dogs is key to reducing dog bites. State Farm does not exclude dog breeds or types from insurance coverage because under the right circumstances, any dog might bite.
- Dog bites (and other dog-related injuries) accounted for more than one-third of all homeowners liability claim dollars paid out in 2016, costing in excess of \$600 million, according to the [Insurance Information Institute](#) (I.I.I.) and [State Farm](#)®, the largest writer of homeowners insurance in the United States. An analysis of homeowners insurance data by the I.I.I. found that the number of dog bite claims nationwide increased to 18,122 in 2016, compared to 15,352 in 2015 – an 18 percent increase. The average cost per claim for the year, however, decreased by more than 10 percent. The average cost paid out for dog bite claims nationwide was \$33,230 in 2016, compared with \$37,214 in 2015 and \$32,072 in 2014.

- The U.S. Postal Service reports that 6,755 letter carriers were attacked last year, an increase of 206 attacks over 2015. They ask that if a letter carrier delivers mail or packages to your front door, place your dog in a separate room and close that door before opening the front door. Dogs have been known to burst through screen doors or plate-glass windows to get at strangers. Dog owners should keep the family pet secured.

About American Humane

American Humane is the country's first national humane organization, founded in 1877. For more information, please visit www.americanhumane.org today.