

# COMMUNITY SAFETY: Preventing a Bite



Our pets are family, but it's important to understand any cat or dog, of any breed, is capable of biting. They may bite for a variety of reasons, whether it's because they are uncomfortable, they are protecting something, or they are afraid. And the larger the animal, the more damage that can be done. A bite that injures a person or pet can have serious emotional and financial consequences for all involved in the incident. As pet parents, there are some basic things you can do to keep you and your pet safe and help prevent a bite from happening.

1. Spaying and neutering early helps prevent those pesky hormones that can affect behavior.
2. Visit your veterinarian regularly. If a pet is in pain or uncomfortable, it can affect his mood, just like when we don't feel well. Plus, a rabies vaccination is required in El Paso County.
3. Always walk your dog on a leash. Besides being the law in many places, you can't always control external factors. Even if you believe your dog is "friendly," it will also prevent your dog from approaching other dogs that aren't as friendly.
4. Give your pet plenty of opportunities to exercise. Regular walks, play dates, and games help your pet burn off excess energy and become more comfortable in new situations.
5. Leave your pet alone when he's eating, sleeping, or chewing on a toy. Even pets need a little "me" time.
6. Teach young children in your family to respect pets by establishing boundaries. Ear pulling, riding, or putting hands in a pet's mouth are intrusive and can easily instigate a bite or attack.

7. Don't reach over or through fences to pet a dog. They view this as invading their territory.
8. Never assume a dog will be friendly in every situation. Anxiousness, fear, or even too much excitement can increase a dog's likelihood of biting.
9. If you think a dog is going to bite, don't run. This can trigger predatory instincts. Instead, stand still and avoid eye contact so the dog doesn't feel challenged. If the dog does attack, yell loudly for help.
10. If you or your pet are attacked by another pet, get the owner's contact information and report the incident to Animal Law Enforcement so a rabies vaccination can be confirmed. Additionally, all bites in El Paso County, including encounters with wildlife, must be reported to the El Paso County Health Department. [Click here](#) to file a report.

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