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Sally Ellertson
Public Information Officer
141 West Renfro
Burleson, Texas 76028-4261
817-426-9622
F: 817-426-9390
sellertson@burlesontx.com
www.burlesontx.com

Any dog can bite, if provoked. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, last year, nearly 5 million people were bitten by dogs in the United States, and nearly a million people, more than half of them children, require medical attention for dog bites every year.

Next week, May 20-26, has been proclaimed National Dog Bite Prevention Week. The goal is to educate people on how to avoid dog bites. The tips include:

- Carefully select your pet and consult your veterinarian about the dog's behavior, health and suitability.
- Make sure your pet is socialized as a young puppy so it is comfortable around people and other animals. Don't put your dog in a situation where it feels threatened or teased.
- Wait until your child is older, approximately 4 years old, before bringing home a dog.
- Train your dog – basic commands are sit, stay, no and come. Avoid high energy games like wrestling or tug-of-war. And use a leash in public to ensure that you are able to control your dog.
- Keep your dog healthy. Vaccinate against rabies and preventable infectious diseases. How your dog feels directly affects how it behaves.
- Neuter your pet (all animals adopted from the Burleson Animal Shelter must be neutered or spayed).
- Be a responsible pet owner. Obey leash laws. Make sure fences and gates are secured. Spend time socializing with your pet. Walk and exercise your dog regularly to keep it healthy and to provide the much needed mental stimulation.

To avoid being bitten, follow these tips.

- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Be alert for potentially dangerous situations.
- Teach children, including toddlers, to be careful around pets (never approach a strange dog or try to pet dogs by reaching through a fence; always ask permission from the dog's owner before petting the dog).
- Don't run past a dog because dogs naturally like to chase and catch things.
- Never disturb a dog that is caring for puppies or a dog that is eating or sleeping.

- If a dog approaches you to sniff you, stay still because most dogs will go away once it determines that you are not a threat.
- If you are threatened by a dog, remain calm. Don't scream or yell. Speak calmly and firmly and avoid eye contact. Back away slowly until the dog is out of sight. Don't turn and run.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck and protect your face.

If you are bitten by a dog or your pet bites someone, report it immediately to the Burleson Police Department, 817-426-9903 and seek medical attention.