VICIOUS DOG ORDINANCE REVISED
Tips for Preventing an Incident with Your Dog

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors revised the Vicious Dog article of the County ordinance, providing more options for hearing officers to set restrictions on owners or deem a dog vicious. The ordinance became effective November 3, 2017.

The ordinance change follows a recent rise in incidents involving dog attacks and hearings to determine appropriate actions to take to protect public safety. Incidents result from a lack of awareness or irresponsibility on the part of the dog owners. The solution is for dog owners to ensure they are responsible and fully in control of their dog at all times.

Steps can be taken to prevent dog attacks. Proper socialization of puppies from a young age is a great start. Take your dog to training classes, as soon as you acquire the dog. If your dog is exhibiting concerning behavior(s) seek help from a trainer or behaviorist before an incident occurs to prevent these tragedies. Be a responsible pet owner and do not allow your pet(s) run loose or to pose a public safety risk to the community.

Follow these recommendations to prevent an incident with your dog, which could lead to people or animals being seriously injured, impoundment of your dog, a hearing and fees and restrictions:

1. Don’t let your dog run loose and take measures to prevent any accidental escapes.
2. Ensure that your yard is securely fenced and that gates are latched at all times. Procure locks if keeping gates closed is an issue.
3. Walk your dog on a leash no longer than 6 feet in length (as required by law) and maintain control of your dog at all times.
4. If the front door is a possible point of exit for your dog, install a storm type screen door with a self-closer to ensure the dog does not escape.
5. Educate family members and visitors about your dog’s tendencies. Have them help in ensuring your dog(s) are kept properly confined.
6. Maintain a current license on your dog, as required by law, and have the dog wear the tag. Microchipping is permanent form of identification and can ensure your dog is returned to you if he or she does get out.

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7. Spay or neuter your dog. An altered animal is less likely to run away to seek a mate, less likely to engage in violent altercations with a human or other animals, and less likely to have hormonally motivated aggression if they do escape from their yard.

The consequences of a dog attack can be far reaching. It may result in injury or death to the victim owner or victim dog. The dog (or dogs) involved in the attack are usually impounded pending a vicious dog hearing. The hearing outcome can be restrictions placed on the dog owner or an order that the attacking dog be euthanized. There is financial liability for the actions of the dog, seizure of the animal and a possible final result of euthanasia. There is also responsibility for the expenses of the impoundment and hearing, and any restrictions that are imposed by a hearing officer.