Dealing with Animal Bites

Santa Barbara County Animal Services (a department within the Public Health Department) has a two pronged approach to protect the public from animal bites and dangerous dogs: 1) Residents are reminded how they can protect themselves from animal bites and 2) Animal Services has protocols in place to investigate and respond to complaints of animal bites and potentially dangerous animals.

It is best to be proactive and prevent animal bites. You should never approach a loose dog that you do not know or a dog that is confined; chained, locked in a car, in their front yard, etc. You should never leave a young child alone with a dog. Do not pet a dog without asking permission and first allowing the dog to see you. Placing your face too close to a dog’s face can be threatening to a dog and should be avoided. Leave dogs alone that are eating, sleeping, or caring for puppies. Should you feel threatened by a dog at any time do not scream and run away. The best thing you can do is to remain motionless and avoid eye contact with the dog. Once the dog loses interest slowly back away from the dog until it is out of sight.

“Any animal can bite,” says Jan Glick, Director of Animal Services, “our goal is to protect the community from animals that pose a safety risk but we need the community’s help by reporting incidents immediately.”

When an aggressive dog complaint is received by Animal Services an Animal Control Officer is dispatched. Upon investigating the situation the officer will take appropriate action which may include speaking with the animal owner, providing a written warning, sending a letter or impounding the dog. There are specific guidelines for owners to keep their dogs and keep the public safe.

A dangerous dog is classified as a dog which has bitten or caused serious injury to a person or domestic animal without provocation, menaces or attempts to bite or attack any person without provocation, engages in an attack which requires defensive action by any person to prevent bodily injury or property damage when such person is acting in a peaceful and lawful manner, engages in or is found to have been trained to engage in exhibitions of fighting, or a protection dog that is straying or has escaped from confinement or restraint.

Animal Services takes all complaints seriously. We ask that the public help by reporting dangerous dogs to their local Animal Services Shelter. If you have questions regarding dangerous dogs, need to report a dangerous dog, or need more information contact your local Animal Services office; Santa Maria at 805-934-6119, Santa Barbara at 805-681-5285, or Lompoc at 805-737-7755. Please click on link to access the Animal Bite Report Form online. Your safety is our highest priority.
Influenza is not a mandatorily reportable disease in California. However, the Public Health Department has a multi-pronged approach to monitor flu activity in our county. Santa Barbara County has five reporting Sentinel Provider sites this influenza season. The five Sentinel Providers found only 2 of the 770 patients seen in week 7 (2/10/13-2/16/13) presented with influenza-like illness (2/770; 0.26%). This is a decrease from week prior (see chart below).

Of the 2,382 patients seen in area Emergency Departments for week 7, 305 met the influenza-like illness case definition (16.62%) and 27 of those were admitted. This was also an overall decrease from prior week. The local hospital labs reported having tested 244 patients with rapid tests with 42 testing positive (17.21%; 34 flu A, 8 flu B) in week 7 which is a decrease from prior week. With all these indicators, decreases have been seen from the prior week’s reporting.

Since the season began, a total of 84 clinical specimens have been submitted to the Public Health Laboratory from hospital laboratories for PCR testing: 39 tested positive (46.42%; 38 flu A, 1 flu B). There have been five flu-related deaths reported in Santa Barbara County. The ages at death were 60, 84, 85, 93 and 96. This included four females and one male. There have been 5 upper respiratory illness (URI) clusters reported in south county Skilled Nursing Facilities, 4 of which have been confirmed to be influenza and those are considered flu “outbreaks.”

**Summary of Recent Influenza Activity in Santa Barbara County**

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