

KAR Friends

May 2013



Dear Reader,

This month, Kalamazoo Animal Rescue is helping to raise awareness for **National Dog Bite Prevention Week**, May 19-25. The [Center for Disease Control](#) reports that 4.7 million Americans are bitten by dogs each year. The most common victims are small children (typically five to nine-years old), the elderly, and then postal service carriers. Also, males are more likely to be bitten than females.

To keep both our two-legged and four-legged friends safe, this *KAR Friends* issue is devoted to providing information about what to do if you or a loved one is bitten, if your pet is bitten or attacked by another animal, and most importantly, tips for preventing bites all together.

Also, KAR is partnering with the [Social Charity Circle of Kalamazoo](#) for a special fundraiser event at [O'Duffy's Pub](#) on Thursday, May 23rd from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm. A \$10 donation at the door goes directly to Kalamazoo Animal Rescue and provides you with a ticket redeemable for one complimentary drink. For more details, visit our [Happy Tails](#) blog.

Danielle Wallis
Marketing Coordinator

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KAR Friends Editor

Animals Bite

What To Do If You Are Bitten

By Katie Drenth



Not all pets that bite are aggressive, but it's important to remember that ALL animals can bite. Some bites are just accidental and of no fault of the animal or victim. A creature may be scared, injured, sick, elderly, irritated, or protecting a person or "high-value" item like a toy or food.

An animal bite, scratch, or exposure is defined as having one's skin abraded by an animal's teeth or claws, or coming into contact with an animal's saliva through abrasions or mucous membranes (eyes, mouth, nose, etc.).

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In 2012, Kalamazoo County Animal Services and Enforcement (KCASE) dealt with 417 quarantine cases (bites and possible rabies exposure), down from 508 quarantine cases reported in 2011.

There are far fewer rabies exposure cases than actual bites and most rabies exposure cases stem from a bat in the house. While most bites do not involve rabies exposure, it is still a possibility, and preventing the spread of this fatal disease is one of KCASE's top priorities.

What is Rabies?

[Rabies](#) is a viral disease that attacks the nervous system and is almost always fatal.

What is Rabies Exposure?

Rabies exposure results from being bitten or scratched by a domestic animal (dog, cat, etc.) or a wild animal (bat, raccoon, woodchuck, etc.). Rabies can be spread by "bite exposure" and "non-bite exposure." Bite exposure is when a human or animal is bitten or scratched by an infected animal. Non-bite exposure is when the infected animal's saliva comes into contact with broken skin, abrasions, open wounds, scratches, or mucous membranes (nose, mouth, eyes, ears, etc.)

Most Common Rabies Exposure Cases

Most cases stem from wild animal bites (bats, skunks, raccoons, etc.).

Basic First Aid

If you are bitten or attacked by a domestic or wild animal try to stay calm. Immediately wash the wound with warm soapy water and contact a doctor immediately. ALWAYS seek medical attention—animal bites, especially cat bites and scratches can become infected very quickly.

Reporting a Possible Rabies Exposure Case

State law requires that possible rabies exposure cases be reported with 24 hours of the incident. You can contact KCASE by phone at 269.383.8775, or fill out a [bite report form](#) online that can be faxed to Animal Services at 269.383.8713. It is very helpful to bring the bite report form with you when visiting a doctor or veterinarian after a bite has occurred.

Quarantine

KCASE requires a 10-day quarantine—regardless of vaccinations—of the animal to ensure that there is no rabies exposure/risk to public health. The quarantine is simply an observation period where the animal is monitored closely. This can be done at the animal owner's home, the Animal Shelter, or a location mutually decided upon by the animal's owner and KCASE.

Additional Resources

- [Bites and Rabies FAQs](#)
- [Rabies FAQs Brochure](#)
- [First Aid for the Pet Owner](#)

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Ask the Vet

Treating A Pet If They Are Bitten

By Karren Jensen

Reviewed By Bruce Withers, DVM

[Eighth Street Veterinary Care](#)



If your pet is bitten by another animal—whether dog-to-dog, dog-to-cat, cat-to-cat, or domestic companion to wildlife critter (bat, raccoon, fox, skunk, coyote)—they may require treatment.

Animals bite each other for a variety of reasons ranging from rough play, to dominance, to disputes over food and territory. Because of this, bite wounds are quite common—accounting for 10 to 15% of all trauma visits in which an owner seeks veterinary help. Whether you have a cat or dog, the actions you must take after your pet is bitten are very similar.

First, examine your pet to see how severely he or she is injured. If your pet has any of the following symptoms, seek emergency veterinary care immediately:

- Bleeding that won't stop or can't be controlled.
- Intractable pain.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Weakness.
- Collapse.

If you witnessed the fight and know the owner of the other animal, find out whether the other pet is up to date on vaccines and veterinary care. If your animal was bitten by or suspected to be bitten by wildlife, it is important to contact your veterinarian for advice regarding possible rabies exposure. If the wounds are not life threatening, as described above, you can clean and disinfect the wounds using diluted hydrogen peroxide, povidone iodine, or chlorhexidine if it is safe to do so. Use extreme caution approaching any injured animal and apply a muzzle to avoid getting bitten. Even the gentlest pet may bite any human if he is frightened and in pain.

Even if the wounds are not severe any puncture can lead to infection, so you need to seek veterinary care for your injured pet within 12 hours. Cats and dogs have many kinds of bacteria in their mouths which can be injected into a bite wound. In addition, cats have sharp, thin teeth which are perfect for puncturing skin while dogs have strong jaws capable of inflicting damage to the puncture site as well as severe trauma to the underlying tissues. Whether your pet's wound was inflicted by a cat or dog, the consequences can be serious and a vet visit is essential to determine the nature and extent of the injury.

Finally, the best way to treat a bite wound is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Keep cats indoors and away from other

UPCOMING ADOPTION EVENTS

- May 18th and 25th, Petco
- May 23rd, O'Duffy's Pub
- June 1st and 15th, Petco
- June 8th, PetSmart

Visit the [Events](#) page on our website for upcoming adoption and other special events

animals. Dogs need to be walked on a leash and not be allowed to run loose, especially in areas where they are likely to encounter other pets. If you are introducing a new pet into your home, prevent fights and bites by carefully introducing the new animal under controlled and supervised conditions.

Additional Resources

- [Bite wounds in dogs](#)
- [Puncture wounds in dogs](#)
- [Bite wounds in cats](#)

Cat's Corner

Cat Bite Saga

By Kate Fayling

Cat bites can be very serious, just ask any medical professional. Personally, I never knew this until I was at the hospital, hooked up to a broad-spectrum antibiotic and awaiting surgery due to a cat bite.

Studies¹ have shown that 80% of cat bites become infected while 3 to 18% of dog bites become infected. Why the difference? A feline's teeth are sharp as a needle and can puncture soft tissue and bone. A wide range of bacteria reside in a cat's mouth. Together, a cat's sharp teeth are able to introduce bacteria through a puncture wound into the tissue. Puncture wounds are known to have little blood flow and heal relatively fast. As a result, the healing process may seal the bacteria into the tissue where it begins to create havoc. Left unattended, cat bites can lead to infection, blood poisoning and/or hospitalization.

I have had cats all my life while growing up in a small town in the northeast. We had a farm next door and it was very common for a stray cat to wander into our yard and find a loving, compassionate little me to love and pamper him much to the chagrin of my mother. As an adult, I have opened my home to over 50 kittens and cats as a KAR foster volunteer. All the while naïve to what could happen.

Last summer I fostered a cat with eight beautiful babies. Momma Kitty was a great mother; she loved and fed her babies, and was super sweet to the humans in the house. She took her role as mother and protector very seriously. Her defensive nature towards our dog and cat was perceived as normal as we had seen no other signs of aggression since we began to foster her.

The incident happened quickly one Wednesday afternoon. Momma Kitty started to hiss and strike at the screen door to warn our dog who was outside to stay away. Not wanting my screen door to be ruined I decided to pick her up and shut the main door. As I started to pick her up she bit me on my left wrist. Two teeth sunk in on the top of the wrist with the other two puncturing the bottom of my wrist, just below the base of my thumb. It was so quick, I didn't even register what had happened until I dropped her and inspected my wrist. This was not her fault; I was the one who misread her body

PETS OF THE MONTH



[Kimmie](#)



[Roscoe](#)

See all of our adoptable [Cats](#), [Dogs](#) and [Kittens!](#)

Footnote

1 Dog bites. A neglected problem in accident prevention. Lauer EA, White WC, Lauer BA. *Am J Dis Child*. 1982 Mar; 136(3):202-4.

Bacteriologic analysis of infected dog and cat bites. Emergency Medicine Animal Bite Infection Study Group. Talan DA, Citron DM, Abrahamian FM, Moran GJ, Goldstein EJ. *N Engl J Med*. 1999 Jan 14; 340(2):85-92.

Man's best friend?: a review of the Austin Hospital's experience with dog bites. Thomas PR, Buntine JA. *Med J Aust*. 1987 Dec 7-21; 147(11-12):536-40.

language and the situation. Looking back, Momma Kitty displayed eight of the nine body postures as outlined in the [ASPCA's list of offensive body postures](#) that indicate the cat is more likely to act in an aggressive manner.

- A stiff, straight-legged upright stance.
- Stiffened rear legs, with the rear end raised and the back sloped downward toward the head.
- Tail is stiff and lowered or held straight down to the ground.
- Direct stare.
- Upright ears, with the backs rotated slightly forward.
- Piloerection — raised fur, hackles up, including fur on the tail.
- Constricted pupils.
- Directly facing opponent, possibly moving toward him.
- Might be growling, howling or yowling.

If I had paid attention to Momma Kitty's eyes, I potentially would have seen all nine body postures. Without realizing the seriousness of the situation and her emotional state at the time, I put myself into a grave situation.

Following the bite, I cleaned the wounds with soap and water as I would do with any other scrape or cut. The wound did not bleed a lot—typical of a puncture wound—I ignored the pain, thinking it would heal on its own. The following morning I could not comfortably move my wrist nor pinch my thumb and forefinger together. I had swelling and a noticeably red area encompassed all four puncture wounds. At the doctors that afternoon, I was told to go to the hospital as soon as arrangements could be made and that I had to have surgery. At the time I did not know that the puncture wounds went into the tendons of the wrist and hand. With little blood flow through the tendons, infection had set in.

I had surgery that night and a bacteria sample was collected from the abscess that had formed on one of my tendon sheaths. I learned that a cat's mouth harbors a host of bacteria and we needed to know specifically what I was infected with in order to treat it. It took 48 hours for the culture to develop. Meanwhile, the infection spread up my arm indicating that the broad-spectrum antibiotic was not working. The culture found the bacterium to be [Pasteurella](#) which was treatable and I could go home. I began an antibiotic regime, rehabilitation and painful daily cleanings lasted for two weeks. Today, almost nine months later, I have four scars and a still tender wrist that reminds me of how ignorant I was.

In the event you are confronted with a cat displaying aggressive body postures, walk away. Quickly try to defuse the situation by making loud noises—distracting both parties. If you are bitten, it is extremely important to clean the wound immediately with warm

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soapy water. For a puncture wound, try to open it up as best as possible. It will be painful, but less so than the possible alternative of an infection. Then, apply an antibiotic cream to the wound and bandage it securely. Monitor the puncture wounds closely for the next couple of days. If you notice redness, swelling, achiness, tenderness at and surrounding the wounds, seek medical attention. Most likely, an oral antibiotic will be administered; however, the situation can be more serious and surgery may be necessary.

WELCOME NEW KAR VOLUNTEERS

Alaina Birchmeier
Jill Busby
Nathan Gross
Sue Sears
Laurie Spencer
Sara Stangl

Doggie Den

Bite Prevention Tips

By Kim Bourner

There are 46.3 million dog-owning households in the U.S., and forty percent of these have more than one canine, according to an [American Pet Products Association](#) survey. If you're reading this, there's a chance you are a caretaker for one or more of the 78.2 million dogs in the United States.

Sadly, 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs each year, with less than 20% resulting in medical attention. The good news is that bites are largely preventable. Staying in touch with your pet's emotions will help you to know how he or she reacts in certain situations so that you may keep them out of harms way or allow them to partake in new adventures.



Here are some tips for preventing bites:

- Spay/Neuter — Altered pets are typically less aggressive and less likely to bite.
- Do NOT approach unfamiliar dogs. This is a very important principal to teach children.
- Always ask permission before attempting to pet an animal that you do not know.
- Do not leave young children or infants unattended with a pet.
- Learn to understand an animal's body language. Dogs and cats are expressive. They will let you know when they are uncomfortable or irritated—stiff posture, growling, hissing, tail raising, lip smacking, etc.
- Do not tease or play aggressive games (e.g. wrestling, tug-of-war).
- Do not pull an animal's tail, ears or paws.
- Socialize and train your pet.
- Keep pets on a leash while out in public.
- Leave an animal alone when they are eating.

What to do if you think you might be attacked or are attacked?

- Do NOT scream or run away—an animal's natural instinct is to chase prey.
- Remain motionless “as still as a tree” with your hands at your sides and avoid eye contact.

- Back away slowly once the animal loses interest.
- If the animal is going to attack, put anything you can between you and it—bicycle, purse, jacket—to “feed” it.
- If you are knocked down, curl into a ball and cover your ears and back of the neck with your hands. Don’t scream and remain still.
- Seek medical attention immediately and report the bite/attack to Kalamazoo County Animal Services.

Additional Resources

- [Dog Bite Prevention](#)
- [Canine Body Language](#)
- [How to Avoid a Dog Bite](#)
- [Dog Bites](#)

Special Event

Kalamazoo Humane Society Dog Walk Recap

By Katie Drenth



[Reggie](#)

Hundreds of dogs of all shapes and sizes, colors and breeds attended the 29th annual KHS Dog Walk on May 4th with their humans in tow.

Participants walked the two-mile course through Prairie View Park in Vicksburg to help raise funds to benefit KHS.

With a plethora of activities, contests and participation from various animal rescue groups, it’s easy to see why the Dog Walk is such a popular annual event. Not only is it fun, but it helps to support pet adoptions and celebrate the human-animal bond.

Check out our [Happy Tails](#) blog for pictures of KAR foster dogs and visit the [KHS website](#) for other highlights from this year’s Dog Walk!

About Us

Kalamazoo Animal Rescue is an all-volunteer, federally recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was founded in 1991 and is funded entirely through private donations.

KAR is dedicated to providing refuge to homeless, stray and abandoned cats and dogs in Southwest Michigan.

Our volunteers give their time and energy to the efforts of rescuing animals and helping them to find permanent homes.



KAR LINKS

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- Become a [foster family](#)
- [Senior Cat Companions](#)
- KAR [Website](#)



Make a [donation](#) and help KAR help animals!

CONTACT US

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[Questions or suggestions](#) for the newsletter?

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