

# Dog Bite – Awareness and Prevention – Event

## 98/2223

2022/45\_WHS

### Summary of the issue

There have been reports that NSW SES members and support Agency members have been bitten by dogs whilst conducting Rapid Damage Assessments (RDA). NSW SES require members and partner Agencies to be aware of the risks of dog bite and prevention strategies

### Nature of the hazard

NSW SES members are often required to attend members of the public's private residence to perform their duties during storm, flood, damage and re-supply operations. Dogs on premises pose an unpredictable hazard as they can see strangers entering their property as a threat. Their instinct may be to attack.

- Dog bites within occupational contexts are mostly to hands, arms and legs resulting in lacerations, open wounds, puncture wounds, superficial injuries and wound infection (tetanus)
- The emotional state of the dog may have been affected by the flood event and as a result they are less likely to tolerate interaction

Aggressive dog behaviour may look sequentially like some, or all of the behaviours below:

- Becoming very still and rigid
- Guttural bark that sounds threatening
- Lunging forward &/or charging at a person
- Mouthing and muzzle punching
- Growling, showing teeth, snarling, snapping
- Quick nipping without marks
- Followed by escalation into biting

Common dangerous situations occur when dogs are chained, eating, sleeping or caring for puppies and feel that their territory is threatened.

### Action now required

- Ensure a dynamic risk assessment is undertaken prior to entering members of the public property
- Wear SES uniform, long pants, long sleeves and field boots
- When approaching a property make noise to alert any dogs to your presence
- Check for signs of a dog such as chains or ropes secured to a structure or tree, dog food, bones, water bowls and/or doghouse.
- Exercise a level of caution around all dogs.
- Do not enter the property if the dog is displaying aggressive behaviours

- Request the resident/s secure their dog safely
- Keep a safe distance between you and the dog, even if it is on a leash
- If a dog exhibits threatening behaviour, do not turn your back on the dog and run away, never make direct eye contact, don't scream or move your arms swiftly or raise your hands
- Remember to stop, stand very still, keep your hands by your sides, look at the ground. Try to remain calm. In a deep firm voice say "no" and tell it to "go home/away". Back away slowly until the dog is out of sight
- If the dog attacks, where possible, give it a jacket, book or other item to try & distract it
- Treat any dog bite by cleaning the wound with a saline solution, covering the with a clean dressing and seek first aid. Check if your tetanus immunisation is up to date and get medical attention if required
- Report the incident to your Supervisor and via 1800 SES OHS (1800 737 647)

### **Contact for more information**

Enquiries regarding this safety bulletin should be directed to the WHS Team at [whs@ses.nsw.gov.au](mailto:whs@ses.nsw.gov.au)

### **Authorised by:**

**Sean Kearns – State Duty Commander & Director Regional Operations – 29/10/2022**