



POSTAL NEWS

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Famed Hollywood Dog Trainer and Lassie Descendant Unleash National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 14

*Postal Service, American Veterinary Medical Assn., American Academy of Pediatrics,
Unite to Prevent Dog Bites*

WASHINGTON – A famed Hollywood dog trainer and a descendant of one of the world’s most popular dogs are teaming with the United States Postal Service and other partners to bring attention to a major campaign in America: Dog bite prevention.

Hollywood trainer Bob Weatherwax, son of Rudd Weatherwax, who established the famous “Lassie” line of collies appearing in the classic television series, will today join postal officials and representatives of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to kick off the 2009 National Dog Bite Prevention Week.

Weatherwax will use Laddie, a ninth-generation direct descendant of the original collie, Pal, who immortalized the “Lassie Come Home” MGM films of the 1940s, to demonstrate how to properly react around dogs during a National Dog Bite Prevention Week press conference today at 10:30 a.m. PT at the Whittier Post Office in Whittier, CA. National Dog Bite Prevention Week runs May 17-23.

It’s estimated that 4.7 million people are bitten by dogs every year. One of the saddest aspects of this crisis is that most, if not all, dog bites are entirely preventable through training, proper control of dogs, and

education. Children are the most common victims, followed by older people and postal employees.

“Responsible dog ownership is the key to responsible dogs,” said Weatherwax. “National Dog Bite Prevention Week is a valuable campaign that will heighten awareness and educate the public about responsible dog ownership. I applaud all the organizations leading this important mission.”

“Employee and customer safety are always our number-one concern,” said Postal Service Vice President and Consumer Advocate Delores J. Killette. “National Dog Bite Prevention Week is one of our most important campaigns to help our employees and customers remain safe when they come in contact with man’s best friend.”

The Postal Service offers the following tips:

How to Avoid Being Bitten

- Don’t run past a dog. The dog’s natural instinct is to chase and catch prey.
- If a dog threatens you, don’t scream. Avoid eye contact. Try to remain motionless until the dog leaves, then back away slowly until the dog is out of sight.
- Don’t approach a strange dog, especially one that’s tethered or confined.
- While letter carriers are discouraged from petting animals, people who choose to pet dogs should always let a dog see and sniff them before petting the animal.
- If you believe a dog is about to attack you, try to place something between yourself and the dog, such as a backpack or a bicycle.

How to Be a Responsible Dog Owner

- Obedience training can teach dogs proper behavior and help owners control their dogs.
- When a carrier comes to your home, keep your dog inside, away from the door in another room.
- Don’t let your child take mail from the carrier in the presence of your dog. Your dog’s instinct is to protect the family.
- Spay or neuter your dog. Neutered dogs are less likely to bite.
- Dogs that receive little attention or handling, or are left tied up for long periods of time, frequently turn into biters.

“Approximately half of the 800,000 Americans who receive medical attention for dog bites each year are children,” says Dr. James O. Cook, AVMA president. “Through increased education and other efforts, these incidents are largely preventable. That’s why National Dog Bite Prevention Week and prevention programs are so important. Prevention and education are a true cure for dog bites.”

“Pediatricians treat children with dog bites every day, and some are quite serious. These incidents can be dramatically reduced if children and parents know what to do,” says AAP President David T. Tayloe, Jr., MD, FAAP.

“Children are frequently bitten on the face, which can result in severe lacerations, infection or scarring,” said American Society of Plastic Surgeons President John Canady, MD. “Plastic surgeons, who have the training to preserve and rearrange skin and tissue, performed more than 16,000 reconstructive surgeries after dog bites last year. Following these dog bite prevention tips and educating the public will help prevent attacks.”

Other partners of 2009 National Dog Bite Prevention Week include the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons (ASMS), the American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery (ASRM) and Prevent the Bite.

To help educate the public about dog bites, the AVMA has developed a brochure, “What you should know about dog bite prevention,” offering tips on how to avoid being bitten, what dog owners can do to prevent their dogs from biting and how to treat dog bites.

Such tips include: Pick a dog that is a good match for your home. Consult your veterinarian for details. Socialize your pet. Avoid aggressive games with your dog. To access the brochure online, visit www.avma.org/press/publichealth/dogbite/mediakit.asp.

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An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 149 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes, six days a week. It has 34,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services, not tax dollars, to pay for operating expenses. Named the Most Trusted Government Agency five consecutive years by the Ponemon Institute, the Postal Service has annual revenue of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail.

The AVMA and its more than 78,000 member veterinarians are engaged in a wide variety of activities dedicated to advancing the science and art of animal, human and public health. Visit the AVMA Web site at www.avma.org for more information.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. www.aap.org

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons is the largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons in the world. Representing more than 6,700 members, the Society is recognized as a leading authority and information source on cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery. For more information, visit www.plasticsurgery.org.

The American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons is the oldest organization representing maxillofacial plastic surgeons. The Society accomplishes its mission to advance the science and practice of surgery of the facial region and the craniofacial skeleton through education, research, and advocacy. For more information, visit www.maxface.org.

The American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery is a not-for-profit organization consisting primarily of orthopedic and plastic surgeons that perform microsurgery and other complex reconstructions. For more information, visit www.microsurg.org.

Prevent the Bite's mission is to prevent dog bites to children through education. For more information, visit: www.preventthebite.org.