

TIMELY WARNING ON CHILDREN AND DOGS

News of a tragic incident in New South Wales where a baby was left in a serious condition after being bitten by the family dog, is a timely reminder of the need to be pet safe around children.

Dog and Cat Management Board Chair Felicity-ann Lewis said dog owners need to be especially vigilant when it comes to small children and babies.

“Dogs are wonderful members of our families that provide love and support; they bring us together and help us lead healthy, happy and active lifestyles,” Dr Lewis said.

“But, sadly, any dog can bite, and it doesn’t matter what breed, how placid or good natured your dog is, they are an animal with instincts and can bite for a variety of reasons.

“And when it comes to children, a bite can have life-long consequences, including scarring, loss of sight, depression and anxiety.

“Last year in South Australia, there were more than 450 hospital presentations for dog attacks.

“It’s also important to make sure your dog is well socialised and trained, and when you’re bringing a new baby into the home, it’s especially important that your plan includes the family dog and how to manage their relationship with your new baby.

“That is why we are encouraging owners and potential owners to learn what’s best for their best friend and put it into practice.”

The Dog and Cat Management Board delivers the *We Are Family* program which provides advice on having dogs and cats around small children.

“Research clearly shows that children in the 0–4 age bracket are at the greatest risk of hospitalisation for dog attack injuries.

“*We Are Family* is a guide to nurturing the child/pet relationship. The program is aimed at educating expectant and new parents on the potential risks and provides the knowledge, skills and strategies to ensure that the experience is not only a physically and emotionally enriching one, but a safe one as well.”

The *We Are Family* program is delivered through hospitals and clinics

across South Australia.

For more information, or to download some information on the program, visit <http://www.dogandcatboard.com.au/wearefamily>

Media contact

Jill Freear

Senior Media Advisor
Department of Environment, Water
and Natural Resources

Phone: 8463 7412 or 0428 046 360

Email: jill.freear@sa.gov.au