



Dog Bite Prevention

Federal law allows tenants in public housing to keep companion animals, subject to reasonable regulations established by the public housing agency. (Pet Ownership in Public Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. section 1437z-3.) The agency can charge pet deposits or fees, and can, for example, restrict the size, weight, or number of pets. It can make other restrictions based on the particular property—for example, a high-rise building could reasonably have rules quite different from a smaller building with backyards. While the NJPHA-JIF has not suffered a large number of dog bite injuries, any dog bite is serious. Puncture wounds easily become infected, leading to permanent scars. Based on the depth of the wound, it can cause nerve damage and long-term loss of feeling or function. A survey by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded that dogs bite more than 4.7 million people annually, and almost 800,000 bites each year are serious enough to require medical attention. Dog bites send nearly 334,000 victims to hospital emergency rooms per year – that’s 915 people per day.

HUD Standards of Pet Care

The pet rules may prescribe standards of pet care and handling, but must be limited to those necessary to protect the condition of the tenant's unit and the general condition of the project premises, or to protect the health or safety of present tenants, project employees, and the public. The pet rules may not require pet owners to have any pet's vocal cords removed. Permitted rules may:

- (1) Bar pets from specified common areas (such as lobbies, laundry rooms, and social rooms), unless the exclusion will deny a pet reasonable ingress and egress to the project or building.
- (2) Require the pet owner to control noise and odor caused by a pet.
- (3) Project owners may also:
 - (i) Require pet owners to have their dogs and cats spayed or neutered; and
 - (ii) Limit the length of time that a pet may be left unattended in a dwelling unit.

The pet rules may require pet owners to license their pets in accordance with applicable State and local laws and regulations. Failure of the pet rules to contain this requirement does not relieve the pet owner of responsibility for complying with applicable State and local pet licensing requirements.

PHAs may designate buildings, floors of buildings, or sections of buildings as no-pet areas where pets generally may not be permitted. Similarly, the pet rules may designate buildings, floors of buildings, or sections of buildings for residency generally by pet-owning tenants. The PHA may direct such initial tenant moves as may be necessary to establish pet and no-pet areas. The PHA may not refuse to admit (or delay admission of) an applicant for tenancy on the grounds that the applicant's admission would violate a pet or no-pet area. The PHA may adjust the pet and no-pet areas or may direct such additional moves as may be necessary (or both) to accommodate such applicants for tenancy or to meet the changing needs of existing tenants.

The pet rules may exclude from the project pets not owned by a tenant that are to be kept temporarily on the project premises. For the purposes of paragraph (h) of this section, pets are to be kept “temporarily” if they are to be kept in the tenant's dwelling accommodations for a period of less than 14 consecutive days and nights. HUD, however, encourages project owners and PHAs to permit the use of a visiting pet program sponsored by a humane society, or other nonprofit organization.

Some prevention tips published by **Bulli Ray Occupational Dog Bite Safety** (www.bulliray.com):

1. **Never run away from a dog.** It’s a fact that you can’t outrun a dog, and you should never, ever turn your back on one. You can’t keep a dominant dog from attacking, but you can dominate a submissive dog by taking an aggressive frontal posture. The submissive dog will try to circle behind you to attack.



2. **Be more aggressive than the dog.** You have to let the dog know that you will not back down. Stay forward, stay tall and stay big. Dogs read posture and react to deep voices. Almost every dog knows the meaning of the word “no.” Use it loudly.
3. **Use an object to steer yourself to a safe place.** Put a stick, a garbage can lid, an umbrella or another item between you and the dog. If the dog bites, it will bite the object and not your body.
4. **Keep your back against something.** This keeps the dog from circling behind you and attacking, which is what most dogs prefer. If you back up against a house or a fence, you should then be able to move sideways toward an exit.
5. **Find anything to put between you and the dog.** Most utilities train their meter readers to feed the handheld device to the dog. Another good option is for an employee to remove their hard hat, grab the suspension inside and shove the shell toward the dog. Any barrier is a good barrier.
6. **The most sensitive, vulnerable part of a dog is the paw.** This doesn’t sound like a commandment, but it is important information that most people don’t know. Reaching for a dog’s eyes, head or nose is dangerous because of their proximity to the dog’s teeth, but grabbing a paw can get a dog to back off.
7. **In a pack attack, pick one dog and hurt it.** The other dogs will attack the injured dog and you can escape. This may sound strange, but it is true. In a pack attack, dogs are frenzied. In a frenzy, they attack any sign of weakness. When one dog yelps, the other dogs will go after it. Try to stay on your feet and keep your face and neck covered.
8. **In an attack, face the dog from the side, not the front.** A frontal posture is a dominant posture. This is what you show the dog to get them to back down. If the dog keeps coming, turn to the side to protect your vital organ area and to get a better stance for the impact. A side posture gives you a better chance of staying on your feet and makes your abdomen and neck areas less accessible to the dog.
9. **Dogs are more likely to attack if the owner is present.** Remember that dogs are part of a pack. The owner is usually the alpha member of the pack. Therefore, the dog will try to circle behind you and distract you by biting from the rear.
10. **Make noise before you enter an area.** One of the worst things you can do is startle a dog. Before entering any area through a door or gate, make noise – such as jingling your keys or yelling “housing authority” – to let the dog know you are there and to give you a chance to see the types and number of dogs present.

Many people associate dog attacks with the traditional breeds – including German shepherd, pit bull. But the truth is that any breed of dog can bite someone and cause serious injuries.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact your risk management consultant, or NJPHA-JIF safety director, Jim Rhoads at 610-937-2694 or by e-mail at james_rhoads@pmagroup.com.

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