



Man's best friend? While on your adventure in Scouting you may encounter wild animals such as birds, snakes, and insects or domesticated animals such as dogs while attending meetings, fundraising, or camping.

Incidents involving dogs occur about half a dozen times a year, and their frequency appears to be on the increase. Please study these incidents and review the lessons that can be learned to prevent future injuries.

## Incident Review #1 and #2

At a council camporee, 13 Boy Scouts ranging in age from 11 to 15 were bitten by dogs while playing in a field. A leader had brought four unleashed dogs with him to the event. The dogs became agitated and proceeded to bite the Scouts. The wounds were cleaned and bandaged and the owner sent in the rabies shot records for the dogs.

In another incident, a parent attending a campout brought his dog to the campsite after the group had arrived. Scouts had just finished setting up their tents and were working on preparing lunch. The dog was on a leash with one end secured to the ground. It appeared that a Scout sat down on a tarp and was laying out his sleeping bag. The Scout said the dog charged him with no provocation, and he was bitten on the lower left leg.

### Key Points

- Pets and other animals not part of an authorized Scouting activity should be left at home.
- The dogs were not leashed or in the control of their owner.
- Any animal can become agitated when approached by unfamiliar people.

## Incident Review #3, #4, and #5

A 12-year-old Boy Scout was bitten on the leg by a dog while delivering phone books as part of a unit fundraiser.

In another incident, a 7-year-old Cub Scout was bitten several times while attempting to sell popcorn. The Cub Scout was attacked by a homeowner's dog and sustained injuries to his face and right arm.

A Cub Scout was bitten by a dog while he and his mother were dropping off product sales money and the remaining product. The dog's owner was not expecting them and the animal was surprised.

### Key Points

- Animals can be easily startled and act aggressively in response.
- When possible, inform people when you are coming to their home. This allows them to secure their animals if necessary.
- Approach unknown residences with caution in case animals are present.



“ Be aware of the mood or body language of a dog who is unhappy or may be showing signs of aggression.”



## Incident Review #6

Hikers found an injured dog beside the trail, in the water at the edge of a creek. The dog was either unable or unwilling to walk. The dog bit the leader when he tried to lift the dog out of the water.

### Key Points

- Injured animals are unpredictable and often times more aggressive.
- A Scout is helpful, but in some situations it is better to call for professional help.

## Discussion Questions

- What supervision should unit leaders provide when a program or activity might include exposure to animals?
- When have you encountered a dog or another animal that could have bitten? Describe the incident to the group.
- How do you think these types of injuries could be prevented?
- What risks or hazards are common to animals whether they are wild or domesticated?
- What are the lessons you have learned in this incident review?

## Resources

- “Animal and Insect Hazards”—Guide to Safe Scouting, <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss13/>
- General Health and Safety FAQs, <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gen-faq/>
- Animal Science merit badge pamphlet
- Dog Care merit badge pamphlet
- American Veterinary Medical Association, <https://www.avma.org/public/Pages/Why-do-dogs-bite.aspx>

“Dogs bite for a variety of reasons: fear, possessive instincts, maternal instincts, being startled or bothered, or prey drive.”

