

Thornleigh Vet Aiming for Zero Dog Bites!

Frightening statistics regarding a largely avoidable problem

In the first quarter of this year there were 1,242 dog attack incidents reported to [NSW council](#), a dog attack being any incident where a dog rushes at, attacks, bites, harasses or chases any person or animal. Of these, 95 were incidents involving children, and at least half of these children sustained serious injuries. That's 50 kids injured from dog-inflicted wounds in NSW in only 3 months. But did you know that 77% of sustained dog bites are from a dog owned by a victim's family or a friend?



Education is key

Dr Prue Honson is passionate about reducing this number to zero by educating pet owners and their children on the safest way to act around dogs. She has two young children and a large dog, and is therefore not a stranger to managing these relationships. Sadly, she has also had to euthanase many dogs that have bitten children in situations that could have been prevented. By using her skills and knowledge as a senior veterinarian and additional accreditation from [Thefamilydog.com Stop77 program](#), she is

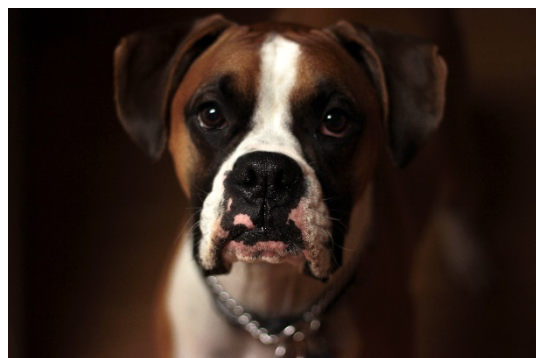
reaching out to the local community and offering to work with schools, preschools, vacation care centres and other community groups, to teach kids how they can interact safely with dogs.

Understanding dog behaviour is important for anyone who interacts with a dog

The program is tailored to the audience, whether it be dog-owners, school children or even preschool children, and is suitable for children who have a dog at home as well as those who don't. It'll get the kids laughing and listening whilst learning some valuable lessons they can share with their family and friends. The school-age kids even get to go home with a test to check that their parents are doing the right thing! Preschool-aged children will learn to "speak doggie" by use of a basic video and a few key messages such as the safe way to pat a dog and what to do if one jumps up on them.

Dangerous situations can be avoided by being able to identify warning signs

Pet-owners need to get involved too. Teaching owners to understand a dog's body language and when the dog may need a break from a situation, or is not enjoying an interaction, is crucial in ensuring that their dog, and people with whom it interacts, are protected from situations that may lead to bites. Learning to recognise these signs helps dog-owners in providing timely and important warnings of when the dog needs time to itself.



Everyone benefits from eliminating bites; both people and dogs

Australia has one of the highest rates of dog-ownership in the world and Dr Honson's goal is to ensure that our human/dog interactions are as safe as possible. Understanding the risk factors associated with dog bites and how to avoid them, is key in ensuring that both people and dogs are protected. Educating children on how to interact safely with dogs is a primary focus for Dr Honson, as children are amongst the most vulnerable and are one of the highest at-risk groups.

If you are interested in having Dr Honson attend your school or community group please contact her on prue.honson@thornleighvet.com.au. Please note this service is free-of-charge.