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Illinois is second in dog bites, report finds

May 16, 2013 | By JoVona Taylor | RedEye

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The likelihood of a person being bitten by a dog in Illinois is pretty high according to an American Veterinary Medical Association report.

In conjunction with National Dog Bite Prevention Week--which is May 19 through 25--the AMCA, along with the U.S. Postal Service and insurance company State Farm, has released a list of dog bite statistics and prevention techniques.

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The report noted that State Farm reported 337 claims worth \$9 million last year in Illinois, putting it second on the list of dog bite claims in the U.S.

Jonathan Rosenfeld, whose law firm--Rosenfeld Injury Lawyers --specializes in representing victims of dog bite attacks, said he is not surprised by the state's spot on the list; in fact, he thinks there have been more attacks that have gone unclaimed.

"Although quite a few dog-related claims are made in Illinois, many people never file a claim because they are unaware that they can be compensated for their injuries," he said.

Under Illinois law, anyone injured by a dog can be covered under the Animal Control Act. Rosenfeld said it is a common misconception that only damages for dog bites can be claimed, but other dog-related injuries such as being pushed, scratched or hurt trying to avoid a harmful dog also are recognized.

Along with the state's rank for dog bite claims, Chicago ranked third on the U.S. Postal Service list for cities where the most postal workers have been attacked by dogs in 2012.

"Unfortunately, postal workers are asked to go to people's homes, and some owners do not have their dogs properly trained," Rosenfeld said. "Postal workers have rights to recover damages as any other person [attacked by a dog]."

With more than 500 dog injury cases under his belt, Rosenfeld said people from all occupations and age ranges can fall victim to a dog attack. He advises people to stay away from dogs they do not know, always ask the owner for permission to pet a dog and to use common sense when dealing with animals.

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