

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(05/25/07)

CONTACT: Karel Minor  
Office: 610-921-2348, ext. 10  
kminor@berkshumane.org

## **Humane Society of Berks County Announces Dog Law Enforcement Sweeps Following Dog Attack In Reading**

The Humane Society of Berks County, Berks County's leader in animal welfare, announced that it will be instituting a dramatically increased enforcement program following the mauling of a young girl in Reading on May 24. The HSBC will be conducting random license and rabies vaccination enforcement sweeps throughout the City over the next few months and owners found in violation will be immediately cited for the maximum possible penalties. "Dog bites generally and Pit Bull bites specifically have been on the rise this year in Reading," said Karel Minor, HSBC executive director. "As a result, the HSBC has been increasing enforcement efforts, as well as increasing license and vaccination clinic services to help responsible owners comply with the law. However, in light of yesterday's horrible attack, the HSBC will be dramatically and aggressively enforcing every local ordinance and State law available to us. Dog owners should expect **zero tolerance** for violations of the law. "

The HSBC's mid-year report to the Reading Animal Control Board is expected to state that, if the current trend in bites continues, the City's Dangerous Dog Ordinance will once again be brought into effect for Pit Bulls and Pit Bull mixes in 2008. If this is the case, all Pit Bulls in the City will be subject to licensing fees of \$50 to \$500, mandatory muzzling while in public, and other sanctions until the bite numbers are sufficiently reduced.

The Humane Society has been working to ensure that the ordinance is not implemented again by more aggressively citing bad dog owners and offering assistance to good owners. "We know that the vast majority of Pit Bull owners are caring, responsible people," said Minor. "We don't want them penalized because of a relatively few criminally negligent owners." The HSBC will be seeking assistance from the Reading Police Department and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement for the conduct of the random enforcement sweeps.

The Humane Society urges all dog owners to ensure that their dog has a current, *displayed* dog license and a current rabies vaccination, issued by a veterinarian. The owner of any dog found to

be without these should expect to receive a citation on the spot. Additionally, any owner of a dog found running at large should expect to receive a citation. Fines can be as high as \$300 day for violations. The increased enforcement will continue until there is a dramatic decrease in the number of bites.

The Humane Society makes every effort to provide effective animal control, without engaging in heavy handed enforcement, by attempting to work with dog owners on a case-by-case basis. However, the surge in bites has required a particularly strong response. Dog owners wishing to ensure that they are in compliance may obtain licenses during business hours and reduced cost rabies vaccinations by appointment at the HSBC.

“I am the father of three young daughters,” said Minor. “I know exactly how I would feel and what I would want to happen if one of them was attacked by someone’s dog. I am going to do everything in my power to make sure that no other parent will need to face that again in Reading this summer.”

The Humane Society of Berks County serves all of Berks County and surrounding communities. It is a private, non-profit organization funded through donations and service fees. In addition to enforcing Pennsylvania’s animal cruelty laws, the Humane Society provides adoption services, spay and neuter services, humane education, pet behavioral counseling, and helps stray, injured and mistreated animals. The Humane Society is located at 1801 N. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Reading.

###