



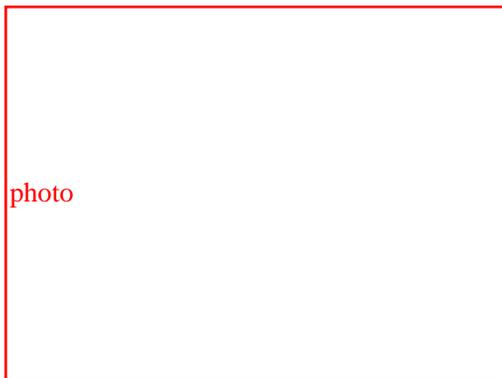
Thursday, October 10, 2002

TOP NEWS

CAUGHT ON THE WEB

Updated March 20, 2002, 2:15 p.m. EST

When man's best friend becomes his worst enemy ...



photo

Kenneth Phillips, left, is an animal lover and lawyer who specializes in law pertaining to dog bite cases.

**By Jennifer Brite
Court TV**

Sometimes man's best friend can become his worst enemy. A recent string of dog mauling cases, like those of Diane Whipple and Shawn Jones, have shown that beloved family pets can sometimes become vicious.

That's why Kenneth Phillips, who has appeared as a guest on Court TV, started dogbitelaw.com, to help bite victims and dog owners navigate the legal system.

Phillips, who represents canine attack victims throughout the nation from his office in Los Angeles, was described by the L.A. Times as "the nation's best-known practitioner of terrier torts," says that dog bites are at epidemic levels.

The number of dogs in the United States increased by only two percent between 1986 and 1996, while the number of dog bite injuries requiring medical treatment rose by 37 percent, according to www.dogbitelaw.com.

"The Web site is meant to be a non-commercial, purely educational treatise on dog law," Phillips said. "I wanted to educate people about a problem that is growing."

About 750 people visit the site each day and it attracts a "huge variety" of users — from parents to animal control officers to journalists, Phillips said. A reporter once told him that his section on Diane Whipple was nicknamed "the Bible of the trial," because so many people in the media used its daily updated information.

In addition to commentary on high profile cases, Phillips offers about 50 people per day who email his site free advice. He answers each question individually, but says his service is for informational purposes only and isn't legal advice.

ON COURT TV NOW

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE

PREMIERE!

Tonight
9:30 PM
ET/PT

TODAY ON COURT TV

DAYTIME

Trial Coverage

- 9am-5:00pm ET/PT
- **Today:** Mich. v. Miller
Sex, Lies and Murder
- **Tomorrow:** Miller continues

EVENING HIGHLIGHTS

Catherine Crier LIVE

5:00pm: The sniper shooting spree

The System

8:00pm: Inside the Chase
Police catch criminals on the run in high speed pursuits

Forensic Files

- **9:00pm:** Was a woman's horseback-riding death more than an accident?
- **9:30pm:** A man's fourth wife mysteriously disappears

The System

10:00pm: Crimes of the Heart Was a high school shooting jealous rage or cold-blooded murder?

*All times ET/PT

His site also offers general information about dog safety, case law, a dictionary of legal terms and advice that he has compiled through the years. He estimates his writings on the subject of dogs and the law posted on the site would now take up more than 300 pages if printed out.

They cover everything from bankruptcy after a large settlement in a dog bite case to ways to get free surgery if you are an attack victim to veterinary malpractice.

Phillips says he started the site in 1998 when his niece was bitten on Christmas Day because he realized the attack could have been prevented through education. He says dog bites are increasing because people are choosing the wrong kind of dog for their lifestyle and because children, who make up seven out of 10 dog bite victims, don't receive dog safety training. He also said that many owners involved in dog bite cases are merely irresponsible.

"In my experience," Phillips said. "Often times owners of vicious dogs train them that way because they want to be aggressive themselves."

He also added that the dog itself is rarely to blame and that a dog of any breed can become dangerous with bad training. He said he is an animal lover at heart and often rescues sick animals from the streets around his home. In his practice, he rarely asks a court to put a dog that has attacked to sleep, unless it has a prior history of antisocial behavior or the offense was particularly violent.

He says his love of animals and a desire to help people is what got him into animal law in the first place.

"Dog bite law is a tangled up but fun area of law," he says. "It affects so many people it makes you feel like your work touches people."

[More Caught on the Web](#)

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