# Can a mail carrier spray your dog? Yes, says the United States Postal Service

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Dog bites and attacks are a serious problem for postal carriers, according to the United States Postal Service.

Last year in Lancaster County, nine postal employees reported being bitten by dogs. And nationwide, 5,714 postal carriers were attacked or bitten.

So far this year, Lancaster County Post Offices have had 10 dog attacks reported.

### **What can carriers do?**

Dog repellent spray is an option.

"What we tell our carriers is, don't take a chance because the last thing a carrier hears is: 'Don't worry he doesn't bite,'" and then is bitten, said Karen Mazurkiewicz, spokeswoman for Postal Service's Central Pennsylvania district.

The Postal Service tells carriers to keep an eye on a dog because a dog is more likely to bite when a carrier isn’t looking. Carriers also shouldn’t startle a dog: If a dog is asleep, the carrier should whistle or call its name if known, before getting close. And carriers are told to stand their ground. If a dog is aggressive, the carrier can also hold their mail satchel in front of them and back away slowly.

### **What is the spray, and is it dangerous to pets?**

The spray contains 0.35% oleoresin capsicum — cayenne pepper extract — in mineral oil.

Animal groups including the American Kennel Club and the Humane Society of the United States have no objection to the proper use of the spray, according to the postal service.

The effect should wear off within 10 to 15 minutes, according to the Postal Service. The spray leaves a yellow stain, which can be removed by washing.

### **When can it be used?**

The postal service has guidelines for how and when to use spray.

[You can read them here.](https://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2007/html/pb22205/dogkit.3.21.html)

Guidelines say the spray is to be "only when a dog attacks" but is not to be used indiscriminately, “especially when there is a danger of spraying children or adults.”

Indiscriminate use can lead to corrective action, up to and including removal, the guidelines say.

### **How is it used?**

Postal Service guidelines say to spray the repellent “directly at the eyes, nose and mouth of the attacking dog,” with an effective range of up to 10 feet.

### **What can you do if you think your animal was wrongly sprayed?**

Customers can make inquiries and complaints to their postmaster.