

Dr. Ernie Ward, DVM

Ernie has more than 20 years of experience in the veterinary industry and is a well-known veterinarian, media personality and author. He is also a founding member of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team.

[Dr. Ernie Ward](#) reflects on the Boston Marathon bombing on April 15, 2013. For more from Dr. Ward, find him on [Facebook](#) or at www.drernieward.com.

On Monday, April 15, 2013 I was watching online coverage of the 117th Boston Marathon during work breaks. I'm an endurance sports junkie and was celebrating virtually with many friends as they crossed the coveted finish line. I happened to be on my computer when a plume of smoke caught my eye from the grainy video feed just before 3 pm ET. Was it a cannon? Had a Boylston Street storefront caught fire? The last, and I mean last, thing I considered in that instant was a bomb. Sadly, an act of terrorism had forever marred one of our nation's most prestigious and prized sporting events and sent waves of fear and disbelief across our nation.

The rest of the day was blur of phone calls, text messages, and trolling social media for news of my friends at the event along with a barrage of news updates. While far from the despair I felt during the September 11, 2001 horrors, this unconscionable act felt more personal as my family could've easily been at that finish line.

I believe living an active and athletic life is important. I've dragged my children (and dogs when allowed) to countless races and events from the time they were born (and before). I often implore my veterinary colleagues to stay healthy and "Emergency Room Ready" at all times. Participate in sports and constantly challenge yourself mentally, spiritually, and physically are words I live by. I never thought amateur athletes and innocent spectators would be a target for terrorism. As I tweeted that day, "Athletic events celebrate the spirit of dedication and accomplishment, not politics." Terrorism had just entered by world of "Believe and Achieve."

So what does this have to do with pets and vets? Nothing - and yet everything at the same time. Nothing in that running marathons or Ironman triathlons don't offer medical insights into veterinary medicine and pet care. Everything in that pursuing an active, healthy lifestyle often involves pets and that we all share this tiny planet, pet lovers and haters alike. This tragedy also demonstrates the protective and healing power of pets as bomb-sniffing and therapy dogs, all heroes in my book, were immediately dispatched. In upcoming months, perhaps even years, the use of pets to mend harmed hearts and mangled bodies will continue quietly. Children and adults alike will be touched and transformed by a gentle nudge, wag, and purr. Americans will grow stronger in mind, body, and spirit. We will be "Boston Strong."

On Tuesday I wrote, "Defy terrorism today by going for a walk, run, swim, or bike. They win if we stop living our lives normally." Vow to spectate or volunteer at your next community 5k. Resolve to make both you and your pet "Emergency Room Ready" at all times. Make it your goal to run a race in honor of those lost or wounded in Boston. Enroll your dog in pet therapy classes. We overcome terrorism, hate, and horror by providing help to those in need, loving each other, and celebrating excellence each and every day. Good defeats evil only if good people act.

Hug your loved ones, pet your dog and cat, and go for a walk or run in memory of those affected by this recent tragedy. Pet owners are some of the kindest, most caring, and generous people on the planet. Together we can turn the tragedy of Boston to triumph, pain to peace, hate to love. Pets, people, and the Boston Marathon - we're all in this together. Fight for good.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian - they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.