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What to do when your dog is aggressive with your children.

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Comment [G1]:

Counselling owners of biting and aggressive dogs is one of the hardest tasks that veterinarian's and concerned breeders and real enthusiast face.

This problem generally becomes apparent when the dog first reaches sexual maturity at 8-12 months of age.

It might begin with the dog growling at children over treats, food or toys or a spiral toward aggression during play with the child.

These dogs stare down the children or assume an aggressive posture with the head down, tail extended, the body in a crouched position and the hair of the neck and back slightly raised.

Dogs often challenge children in the family before they challenge the parents because children are smaller and make noisy quick approaches to the dog.

Do to their small size; bites on the head and face are common.

Because this is a deep-seated emotional response in dogs,

disciplining the dog after a bite has little effect.

The problem must be differentiated from fear biting in dogs which is

a problem in shy, skittish dogs forced into close proximity to a child

and biting in response to pain inflicted on the dog by a child or

gotten used to grab and shaking on the child's clothing.

Certain protective breeds of dog may bite neighbourhood children

engaged in horseplay with your children when they perceive they are

protecting your children.

There is a definite breed-association with aggressiveness.

The most common breed of dog is Cocker Spaniel as a potentially

snappy dog even if the majority of Cockers are gentle.

Aggressive or snappy dogs are the exception rather than the rule.

If both parents of the specific dog are friendly then their puppy will

most likely be too.

So be sure to know and see the mother and, if possible the father as

well.

Other breeds that come to mind are the herding dogs such as

Australian Shepherds, German Shepherds, Huskies and mixed larger

dogs.

As with Cockers, the majority of these dogs are gentle.

Just be sure to check the parents.

Since APBT grab and hold onto (they don't lock their jaws – this is a

myth) the object they are biting and shake they might and usually do

cause severe wounds or death.

Problem breeds change over time – not to only focus on the APBT.

As a breed of dog becomes popular dogs when unstable or poor

temperament dogs of any breed or cross breed are bred by some

breeders to specifically produce more aggressive dogs for a specific

part of the population.

These dogs were not bred when potential owners were more choosy in selecting a pup.

So as the popularity of a breed declines, the frequency of health and personality problems declines as well.

Male dogs aggression are more frequently than in female dogs and encountered more in intact males than in neutered male dogs.

Children bitten are usually between the ages of 4 and 11 years.

Boys are more frequently bitten than girls since they tend to be more outgoing and fearless.

When an owner presents a situation where their dog has attacked or might attack their children first response and safest for all concerned is to find a new, loving home for the dog with a family with no small children.

Often, it only takes reassurances that this is the right thing for everybody concerned for them to comply.

If they plan to replace the dog, make sure to screen potential puppies & their parents for any signs of aggressive behaviour before offering any pups.

If the potential buyer are set on keeping the dog and you cannot talk them out of it, explain to them the risk to their children and the children of neighbours to make sure they really understand the dangers involved.

You really cannot predict which families will be successful in modifying their dog's behaviour.

Then provide them with the name and address of a dog trainer you trust.

Let them know the success rate in modifying this behaviour is less than 50 %.

Here are some of the things suggested they do and don't do during this training:

1) The child must never be allowed with the dog in an unsupervised situation.

- 2) The dog should be muzzled or confined to a crated when small children are present.
- 3) No food items should be allowed in the dog's area.
- 4) Loud noise should be avoided.
- 5) Other dogs and non-family members should not be present.
- 6) No rough-housing should be allowed.
- 7) Allot a morning and evening session of 20 minutes over a period of two months before judging the success of the training.

After a month or two of time has passed using these first seven rules, it is time to cautiously allow the child to pet or stroke the dog with the dog remaining muzzled.

An adult's hand should be present on the dog's shoulder during training.

If the child is *old enough*, the dog should be leashed and the leash should be held taut and given to the child.

The dog should be praised when it shows no evidence of aggression toward the child and ignored when it does.

During the first six months, under no circumstances should the muzzle be removed from the dog when a child is present.

If after six months, no signs of aggression occur, the muzzle can be removed from the dog when an adult has their hand surrounding the dog's mouth and another hand on the dog's shoulder.