

Sensible solutions for dangerous dogs.

13. Addition Table 5.

Temperament testing, education, laws enforcement, rehabilitation. These are tools to assign risk categories to dogs and owners, reduce household and community bite risk.

Temperament testing.

1. Encouraged by a reduction in registration fees for dogs which pass the test.

2. Required by owners' public liability insurance.

Temperament / aggression behavior tests have been used since the 1980s also for selecting working and assistance dogs, by pounds / shelters to assess suitability for re-homing, and by animal management authorities to determine potentially dangerous dogs. There remains a critical need for a standardized and reliable test that can be applied on-site at shelters, pet shops, veterinary practices, and training venues.

There is currently no formal approval or accreditation in place for either the tests or the testers, and this is a significant gap in the ability to respond effectively to dog bites.

Education.

Education has long been considered the “answer” to dog bite problems.

Most dog bite incidents occur in the home, “it is more effective to support activities which include the training abilities of dog owners” (Kuhne and Struhe 2006).

Studies have shown that well designed and appropriately targeted programs to educate children (and their parents) about how to behave around dogs are effective in reducing the incidence of dog bites (Chapman et al 2000, Wilson et al 2003, Jalongo 2008, Meints and de Keuster 2009).

Education was the centerpiece of the approach to reducing dog attacks in Calgary, Canada (City of Calgary 2012).

The Calgary model is based on.

1. A high level of dog registrations.
2. Strong education investment for dog owners and children.
3. Increased penalties for owners of dogs that attack.

The education component included programs delivered in kindergartens and primary schools focused on dog safety. A proportion of all dog registration fees should go to community and targeted education programs, as occurs in Victoria. Some other states have government-run education programs, while others offer very little education on responsible dog ownership. Education programs are also provided by the AVA, dog clubs and shelter and welfare organizations.

Education programs need to address.

1. Educating all dog breeders in correct selection of breeding stock, & the raising & socialization & kennel management with dogs and young puppies (Korbelik et al 2011).
2. Selection dogs of an appropriate size, activity level, coat type and temperament and genetic traits.
3. Importance of effective socialization and management during the critical period of 3- 14 weeks and lifelong training.
4. Benefits and disadvantages of spaying and neutering.
5. Dog restraint, safe confinement, (fences, kennels, chain spots, collars, harness, leashes).
6. Recognition of canine body language.
7. Addressing human behavior around dogs.
8. Training parents to protect small children and children in safe behavior around dogs.

Education programs need to be scientifically evaluated to ensure they result in the required knowledge and behavior changes by expert trainers.

Enforcement laws.

No policy solution will be effective without consistent enforcement of laws to ensure a high level of compliance.

Resourcing is often a major barrier to effective enforcement, and this problem needs to be addressed in every jurisdiction or by government to achieve tangible reductions in dog bite incidents. Sufficiently strong penalties to deter owners from disobeying all regulations are an important component of enforcement.

Penalties for non-compliance should be financial when the dog has not threatened or injured any animal or person but may include

removal of the dog where the dog has behaved in a dangerous manner.

Imprisonment may be appropriate in some circumstances such as repeated dangerous dog offences, “setting” a dog on a person or use of a dog in the commission of a crime.

In addition, by laws must be enforced.

1. Fence laws – all dogs must be confined to the owner’s property behind effective fencing except when the dog is being supervised by suitable individuals off the property.

2. Collar, leash, harness, escape proof resistance confinement laws except when in a designated off-leash area.

Not all dogs are suitable to be off leash.

2. Safe off-leash exercise areas – dogs in off leash areas should still be under the effective control of the person supervising the dog (“call back”) and the off-leash area should prevent dogs from escaping and prevent ingress of unsupervised children.

3. The person in charge of the dog when it is being walked on a leash or in an off-leash exercise area must be of sufficient maturity.

Physical ability and proficiency to restrain the dog from being injured, or from menacing or attacking a person or animal.

4. Street patrols by council officers impound stray dogs, especially targeting areas and times of the day when attacks have been more common (van der Kuyt 2001).

That’s it – Gawie Manjaro – MK.

