

The Quick Guide to

Dog Aggression



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Which Dog Breeds are the Most Aggressive?

A lot of people have misconceptions when it comes to which dog breeds are most aggressive and which ones aren't. Really, there's no such thing as a “bad” breed. All breeds are trainable. The trick to preventing bad/aggressive behavior is in proper training and socialization. Training and exposing a puppy to new situations, people and other animals will give that puppy confidence, and encourages tolerance. This in turn helps prevent aggressive behavior due to insecurities and dominance.

There are many breeds with reputations for aggressive behavior. However, this behavior generally comes about because a dog owner has misunderstood their pet's needs and behaviors, or did not know the correct methods to use to train their dogs, or they did not train them at all. For example, Dog's who are left tied up in a back yard for most of their lives will usually develop very strong territorial behaviors.

Small dogs can sometimes display aggressive behavior such as growling, snarling, biting and lunging, but these behaviors are often ignored or not taken seriously because of the size of the dogs. However, an aggressive small dog is capable of causing terrible injuries to people, particularly children and the elderly. Often the smaller breeds are not trained to obey commands, and this can contribute to any aggressive behavior.

The truth of the matter is, all dogs can be provoked or egged on to bite.

Dog owners should have their beloved pets trained to follow basic commands like *come*, *sit*, *lie* and *stay*. Subjecting dogs to some sort of obedience or training school represents one way of effectively preventing many dog-biting incidents, because a trained dog is generally a better behaved dog.

Here's a look at the various dog breeds that are considered potentially aggressive.

- Chow Chows are generally good with children, but will try to dominate other dogs.
- Lhasa Apso's can be snappish if startled or annoyed
- Rottweilers are naturally protective of their owners but generally have a mellow temperament. Firm training and socialization is required to prevent aggressive behavior towards strangers and other dogs. Unfortunately because of their size and natural protective instinct, these dogs are often trained in ways that encourage aggression.
- Chihuahuas are loyal to their owners, but are suspicious of strangers. Intolerant of rough children, they will often snap. They also tend to be aggressive with other dogs and therefore require early and extensive socialization.
- Toy Poodles can be wary of strangers and may snap if surprised or teased.
- Dachshunds can be irritable, stubborn and jealous, and quick to bite.
- Giant Schnauzers are a very dominant breed, and they require an experienced owner. Without the proper training they have been known to bite children, and will usually try to dominate other dogs.
- Pekinese are prone to jealousy and are intolerant of children who play rough.

- German Shepherds are natural guard dogs. They require firm training and extensive socialization to prevent over protectiveness. They are very much people dogs, and do not like being left alone for long periods.
- Mastiffs are generally very good natured; however they do require training and socialization to prevent aggression towards other dogs.
- American Pit Bulls in particular have a very bad reputation. However any natural aggression in this breed is generally directed at other dogs. They are very much people dogs, however extensive socialization will help prevent aggression towards dogs. They are usually very tolerant of children. Unfortunately, mistreatment or training by irresponsible people to encourage aggressive behavior has led to their terrible reputation. Aggressive pit bulls often have a history of being abused or neglected.
- Bull Terriers are usually loyal, polite and obedient. However this breed needs training and socialization to prevent aggressiveness towards other dogs.

Whether you've got a puppy or a full-grown dog, what's important is that you give it the attention and care it deserves. Recognizing and heeding the warning signs of potential dog aggression problems will make it easier to deal with them at an early stage. When in doubt about something dog-related, consult with a qualified veterinarian and/or animal behaviorist.

Tell-Tale Signs

Aggression in dogs is expressed in a variety of behaviors, including the most obvious - barking and biting! Aggression is a natural behavior of pack animals, and is used to develop both the hierarchy/pecking order of the pack, as well as to provide self-defense in time of danger. There are various levels of aggression and how much aggression the dog demonstrates is determined by how much of a threat the individual/animal/situation is seen to be.

Low level aggressive behaviors

Low level aggressive behaviors are:

- Growling
- Non compliance to commands
- Pushing
- Jumping up on people or animals to intimidate
- Aggressive stance
- Staring
- Nipping at heels or legs (this is usually a herding type behavior displayed by particular breeds. While the dog is not necessarily trying to hurt with this behavior, it can be scary being on the receiving end, and therefore the dog should be taught early on that this is not appropriate behavior).

Low level aggressive behaviors are usually used first in all but very threatening situations. This is often seen when watching dogs interact for the first time. The dogs assume a stiff stance, keeping their heads and tails up and their ears pointed. They attempt to make themselves look as big as possible by raising their hackles and standing as tall as they can. Usually one dog will back down, and further levels of aggression are not needed as the hierarchy has been decided. The size of the dog is often irrelevant in this hierarchy, unless the level of aggression escalates.

With humans this aggression is seen with jumping up, pushing, or growling. With smaller dogs and puppies this behavior is often seen as cute, but it can become serious and even dangerous, and it is important to curb this aggression as soon as it becomes evident.

High level aggressive behaviors

If low levels of aggression are not having the desired effect, a dogs behavior may escalate to higher levels of aggression including:

- Snarling and snapping or showing of teeth
- Biting
- Jumping up and barking in an aggressive manner

The higher level aggressive behaviors have gone beyond warnings to actual physical contact and biting or attempting to bite. These are serious situations, and the dog should be immediately isolated until it can be retrained.

Aggression is a normal behavior for dogs, and it is important for an owner to be able to control the dog's aggression. The dog will need to be taught that aggressive behavior is not appropriate. Through early socialization and a firm understanding of the dog-owner relationship the animal will not show aggression. If aggression does become a problem it is important to deal with the issue immediately. Re-training using positive methods works much better than punishment, but often professional assistance is needed.

Neutering a dog will control the hormonal causes of aggression, but not all aggression is hormonally caused. Spaying and neutering dogs does not guarantee that they will be docile, and breeds that are bred as watch dogs or herding animals will need specific training on being non-aggressive. Some dogs are not good with other animals or dogs, just like some breeds are less tolerant of children. It is important to understand the natural tendencies of the breed of dog that you are considering obtaining to make sure you get a good match for you and your family.

Reasons for Aggressive Behavior in Dogs

Any dog can and will show aggression given the right set of circumstances. Aggression for dogs is a natural response and it is critical to know and understand what circumstances and experiences are likely to provoke aggression in your dog. It is important to remember that what a human may see as an unprovoked aggressive act in a dog may, in fact, be perfectly logical to a canine mind. The major causes or reasons for aggression in dogs are discussed below.

Territorial Aggression

Dogs will use this form of aggression when defending their perceived territory. This is any area that the dog is familiar with or has marked with his or her scent. While you, as the owner, may encourage your dog to protect your property, the dog may view the whole neighborhood or block as his territory to protect.

Guarding Aggression

Dogs tend to guard possessions, and/or members of their “pack” or family. This may include people, other family pets, or even favorite toys or food items. This is the aggression directed at unfamiliar people or animals that are approaching the dog’s people, possessions or food. Sometimes the dog will even guard food or toys from familiar people or dogs.

Transferred Aggression

This often happens when a dog becomes upset or over-excited and instead of becoming aggressive with the specific item, it transfers its aggression/frustration onto another dog or person. For example a child may poke a dog with a stick through a fence, and since the dog cannot defend itself through the fence it may turn its aggression on another dog in the yard or on another person.

Pecking Order Aggression

Dogs are a pack animal, and they need to establish the pecking order or hierarchy with the family or household members (human and animal alike). Once the dog has established his rank in the family he, or she, does not like to be challenged. Often well-meaning owners will inadvertently teach their dogs that they are in fact the highest ranking pack member and that can lead to difficulties in controlling the dog. It is also common for there to be aggression problems between dogs in the same household as they battle it out for the top position.

Aggression due to fear

Dogs respond, like humans, with a fight or flight reaction when presented with a fear causing situation. Dogs that respond with aggression will growl, snarl or even bite if

they become afraid. Remember, different reactions in dogs are due to past experience, genetic disposition, and training methods used. The dog may see a fearful event in a calm environment if he or she has been mistreated in the past. Dogs that would like to use the “flight” option but are trapped or cornered will resort to aggression to attempt to protect themselves.

Dogs will use aggression when they feel that they are threatened, that their position in the pack or family is threatened, or that their territory or possessions are endangered. As humans we often don't understand all the triggers for a dog to respond in this way. Aggression in dogs, whatever the reason, needs to be controlled to avoid a potentially dangerous situation for both humans and other animals. Positive rewards training works well for these dogs, and punishment will rarely help and in fact will often make the aggressive behavior worse.

Training Aggressive Dogs: Case Study

John and Cathy adopted a 3-month-old mixed breed puppy about 2 weeks ago from a Rescue centre. Max, the puppy, is usually easy going but growls when John or Cathy try to pick up his toys, or when they attempt to pet him or get close to him when he is eating. Last week Max ran away into the bathroom with a bone he had taken from the trash. When John came into the bathroom Max growled at him, and then snapped when John tried to remove the bone from his mouth. John and Cathy would like to keep Max, but they do not want to have an aggressive dog as they have children and other family members that visit often.

Considerations

John and Cathy need to consider what reasons, from Max's perspective, make aggression an affective behavior for him to use. Max has had several changes in the last month that may cause him to be fearful and anxious in a new environment, and may cause a fear provoked aggressive response.

The Rescue center had no information on Max's past history or socialization experiences. It may be possible that Max has not had to share, or does not understand that humans may take things away, but they will provide something in return such as extra attention or a positive reward.

Behavior

Max is responding fairly well overall to his new environment. He is using the growling that is intended to warn John and Cathy that he is becoming distressed and feels threatened. This growling can be a signal for humans to change the environment or the approach. Punishing Max for growling at this point will only teach him not to growl, not to stop being aggressive.

Training program

John and Cathy have decided that Max responds with aggression largely out of fear. They have decided to enroll him in a puppy obedience class to help him with socialization, adjusting to new environments and learning to trust them. In addition they are working with Max on providing distractions and positive rewards prior to him becoming aggressive. They have decided to offer him a treat and then reward him with praise and petting when he releases the toy or item in his mouth to them. John and Cathy will then return the item immediately to Max. This will be repeated frequently throughout the day, gradually increasing the time that they keep the item from Max. The dog will not refuse to give up the toy, as he would much prefer the treat. Gradually Max will understand that giving up a toy gets him lots of praise and rewards, and he will even get the toy back as well!

Cathy and John are going to spend time in the room with Max when he is eating. They will talk to him and move about at a distance. Gradually they will move closer and let him learn that they are not trying to take his food. They will schedule feeding and leave the food down for him 20 minutes twice a day. In addition they are planning a trip to the vet to make sure he is receiving enough food at this high growth time in his life.

Environmental changes

In addition to the training program John and Cathy have decided to increase the variety of toys that Max has access to during the day. They will avoid playing tug of war games with him, or any wrestling type activities. John and Cathy will continue to praise and treat Max when he does things correctly. They will make sure that all bones, garbage or other problematic items are kept away from Max until he becomes less possessive and fearful. In addition they plan to have Max neutered as soon as possible.

Preventing Aggressive Behavior in Dogs

Purchasing or adopting a dog is a big responsibility and one that should not be taken lightly no matter what size or shape that dog comes in.

Many people will be tempted by a cute puppy face without taking into account the time and training that is part of being a responsible owner.

There are three main components included when preventing aggressive behaviour in dogs:

- Alpha Dog Training
- Socialization
- Obedience Training

All forms of training or aggression prevention should start from the first day you bring your puppy home.

Alpha Dog Training

Dogs are essentially pack animals. This means that they have a natural hierarchical instinct, and need to know their place in the pack, as well as the rank of other family members.

Many dog owners do not understand this instinct, or do not even realize that it exists. Because of this, the owner will then often inadvertently teach their dog that it is higher in the pack than them, which can lead to difficulties in controlling the dog.

They do this by allowing the dog onto the furniture and beds, by feeding them scraps from their plates, or allowing the dog to walk through doors before them. While this has little significance to the owner, the dog will quickly begin to think that he is the Top Dog. If the dog believes he is the pack leader, then obviously he is going to be more protective of the pack's territory, as well as the pack members. He is also less likely to listen to any command given by owners/family members as he views them as his subordinates. Unfortunately this means that the dog is then more likely to be aggressive towards strangers, as well as less obedient.

So, establishing your dominance is very important. If your dog knows that you are in charge, not him, he is more likely to obey your commands and less likely to be territorial or over protective of your home, yard, or family members.

Methods for establishing your Dominance:

- Make your dog sit and wait for you to walk through doorways first
- Feed your dog after you have eaten
- Don't feed your dog scraps from your plate

- Do not allow your dog into the furniture or beds
- Train your dog in basic obedience

Socialization

It is very important to expose your dog to lots of new situations. This includes meeting lots of other dogs and other people. The more new situations they are exposed to, the more confident they will be and therefore less likely to display fear aggression, which is a common result of a puppy not having been given any socialization.

Socialization is also very important because it encourages tolerance for the presence of strange dogs and/or people, thereby lessening the instances of territorial and dominance aggression.

For the first few months in particular after bringing your puppy home, it is a good idea to take him with you where you go, whenever possible to help expose him to lots of new and fun everyday situations. This of course only applies to dogs that have been fully vaccinated so they are not at risk of catching any infections.

Some helpful tips:

- Introduce your pup to your neighbors, friends and family members.
- Take him for walks and allow him to greet strangers and other dogs at the dog park.
- Organize play dates for your dog with a friend or family member's dog.
- Remember to reinforce good behavior by encouraging and praising friendly play.
- Take your dog to Puppy Classes.

Continue to socialize your dog throughout the remainder of his life.

Obedience Training

Many dog owners hold the belief that obedience training should be delayed, or is not important until a puppy is six months or older. However, puppies can actually begin learning the basic commands as young as eight weeks old. It is recommended that training begins as early as possible before bad behaviors turn into bad habits that are difficult to break. The sooner your dog learns to follow commands given, the easier it will be for you to control him. Not only does this make life easier for you, but it also helps keep your dog safe – e.g. you can use a command to prevent your dog from running onto a busy street.

Obedience training is also important as it helps reinforce your Alpha Dog position.

Often owners of small dogs do not take as seriously the importance of teaching their dogs the basic commands because they feel that their dog is already easily controlled

because of their size. However, small dogs are capable of being aggressive, just as large dogs are, and therefore should be trained in the same fashion.

While your dog is still learning, it is recommended that you keep lessons short, but make them frequent. A dog will absorb more in 4 ten minute lessons over a 24 hour period, than 1 forty minute lesson.

It is also recommended that you continue with daily obedience lessons throughout the life of your dog so that he never forgets what each command means. If not reminded regularly, he will forget!

If you find that you are not confident in teaching your puppy or dog various commands, then obedience classes might be a good option for you. These classes are also good for socializing your dog.

Suggested Basic Commands to teach your dog:

- Sit
- Stay
- Come
- Drop It
- Off (used to verbally move a dog from furniture/beds)

Conclusion

As you will have noticed, the three recommendations for preventing aggression are somewhat overlapping. It is very important to use all three techniques, and you will find that each technique helps reinforce the others.

While these methods are not foolproof, they will go a long way in preventing undesirable behaviors in your dog, in particular aggressive behavior. In many cases they can also make a significant difference in changing existing aggression problems.

How to Stop Dog Food Aggression

Food aggression is potentially dangerous behavior that occurs when your dog becomes territorial regarding its food dish or any other source of food. Aggressive behavior can be shown in growling, snapping, or even biting another dog or human who attempts to go near the food bowl. Since any form of aggression in a dog is inappropriate, this behavior should be immediately addressed and modified to allow your dog to be a healthy and happy member of your household. Furthermore, aggressive dogs are more likely to become violent dogs, so you should take steps to curb this behavior in order to avoid painful injuries to yourself and others.

First of all, if your dog is showing signs of food aggression, you should move the dog's feeding area. If you have more than one dog in your home, completely separate the two animals during feeding time. Many dog owners choose to leave food available to their dogs throughout the day. However, if your dog is experiencing food aggression, this practice should be stopped and your dog should be fed on a schedule. If you are unsure of a proper feeding schedule, contact your veterinarian.

Second, work to establish yourself as the "alpha dog" of your group. Your dog needs to recognize you as the one who provides food and sees you above him in the pecking order of your home. Once this order is recognized, your dog will be less likely to display aggression towards you when you approach his food dish.

The next step is to start being present when your dog is eating.

For two weeks you should put your dog's bowl away and start feeding your dog directly from your hands. Have any other household members do the same (not including children).

After two weeks of feeding the dog twice a day in this manner, retrieve the dog's food dish. Put the empty dish on the floor and gradually add handfuls of food to the bowl. Wait for your dog to finish the first handful, pause a few moments, then add some more.

The next step is to half fill the dish, and then keep adding the rest with your hands.

After a further 2 weeks, the last step is to fill the dish, then teach the dog to sit and wait for your signal to begin eating. Once in a while, call the dog to you mid-meal and give lots of praise for obedience. This final step should be used for the remainder of the dog's life.

Have You Got Problems with a Biting Dog?

Biting problems can occur at any time and can be the result of a number of issues the dog may have. When faced with biting dog woes, it's always best to address the situation immediately instead of waiting for it to become a full-blown crisis. Do not underestimate the seriousness of snapping/biting behaviors.

Although it's true that majority of canines won't bite, even the fuzziest, cuddliest and sweetest pup can and will bite if provoked. And whether they are in the form of nips, bites or actual attacks, there's no doubt that dog bites represent a serious problem.

Biting Dog Problems – What You Can Do

There's no 100% foolproof way to guarantee that your dog will never bite or attack someone. But there are things you can do to significantly reduce the risks. Here are measures people can take to deal with the matter.

- When considering taking in a dog, choose carefully. Many irresponsible people have purchased/adopted a puppy because they are cute, without considering the realities of the situation. Then when that dog grows out of the puppy stage and requires lots of exercise, grooming, food and training, the dog will either be locked in the back yard, or given away. A veterinarian is usually a good source of info regarding pet behavior and suitability. There are also many helpful websites and books that explain the characteristics and specific needs of various breeds.
- Train the dog to obey basic commands like *stay*, *come*, *no* and *sit*. Incorporate the training activity within fun games that aren't too aggressive (e.g. tug of war).
- It's a fact - neutered dogs are less likely to attack or bite. Consider getting your furry best friend spayed or neutered.
- See to it that the dog is properly socialized. If you're getting a puppy, make sure he's socialized so he feels at ease around different types of people, animals and situations. Expose him to various scenarios under controlled conditions. It is a good idea to take him everywhere you go whenever possible – the more exposure he has to various people/animals/situations, the more confident he will be.
- Like any good dog owner, you have to get to know your dog really well. Stay alert for any signs of sickness, aggressive/fearful behavior or if your dog is experiencing discomfort.
- Prevent kids from being bitten by waiting until they are old enough before getting a dog (like seven or eight years old). This way, the children can help care for the dog and are mature enough to be able to treat the dog with respect.
- Have the dog vaccinated.

Dogs, like humans, deserve to be treated with respect. Make them feel like a real member of the family. Dogs that spend a great deal of time tied to a chain or alone in the yard often turn into highly dangerous animals. But the ones that are supervised and well-socialized rarely bite. Connecting with a dog will be next to impossible if their owners keep on distancing themselves from the poor creatures.

The biting and the dog aggression can be treated. With the help of a qualified animal healthcare professional and adequate care from their owners, a biting dog will find it easy to shake off his nasty “biting” habit. If all else fails, hire a professional dog behavior specialist or trainer or trainer.

**Letters to Daniel
Reprinted with Permission**

Letters to Daniel - Multiple dogs in house

Daniel and Team,

I just ordered the SitStayFetch series, and believe it will be beneficial to the issue I am experiencing with my two dogs along with being a better parent to all of my "children"! I have two dogs and two cats. All of them are SPCA animals and the dogs are: Annie, who is almost 7 years old and is a terrier/bearded collie mix. My other dog is Molly, a 4 year old Wheaton terrier mix.

They have lived together now for 3 years and have started to fight within the past 5 months. Annie has always appeared to be more submissive in nature and for a period of time we had issues with her having submissive urination and is an extremely anxious animal - nervous/thunder phobia, etc.

Molly has always been extremely confident and unafraid of anything or anyone. She loved people and other animals and has always just wanted to play.

Recently though, Annie has shown signs of aggression - excessively barking and pulling when strangers and other dogs are present outside. Molly has become more vocal as well and just seems off -- more of a bully than anything. The fighting has also progressively worsened to the point where they are hurting each other and it has become much tougher for us to pull them off each other as they are really out to kill each other.

As you can imagine, we are no longer comfortable with them together in the house and are constantly on edge. The fighting appears to only occur within the house. They can be outside together and can go on walks without incident (walks consists of two adults with one dog each). Also, at night, they can be in the same bedroom together with Molly on my bed and Annie on the floor on her dog bed.

Another important note is that both my partner and I are very active with both dogs and my Mother also lives with us. To give you a little bit of background on changes that have taken place that I believe may have contributed to the change in the dogs: a year ago, we lost our beloved 16 year old Wheaton Mix who was clearly the alpha and I went back to work full time.

I've been doing a great deal of research trying to figure out what is going on with these two and everything is indicating that this is a dominance issue and that they are trying to determine who is now the Alpha.

However, I will tell you that I also believe that the bulk, if not all, of the current problem is all due to the lack of training, structure and obedience that we've neglected to give our two animals.

I also realize that I, myself, have never established dominance over either of the two dogs. I have allowed them to basically get away with everything while my partner has clearly established a more dominant position over the two of them. However, the fighting is now occurring whether I am present or not (prior to! this past month it seemed to only occur when I was in the room) but seems to only happen if there is a human present.

I immediately started to read your section 202 on Dog Problems Solved along with Section 303 on More Dog Problems Solved. Also, I've read Secrets for Becoming the Alpha Dog. I am rather confused though on exactly where to start combating this issue and creating a more peaceful, happy and safe environment.

My fear is that if I focus on becoming the Alpha Dog first, especially with Molly, that I won't be supporting her dominance over Annie and will make the situation between the dogs worse. Thus, I am seeking your advice on where do I begin fixing this issue and what process to follow based on your book. We all fully committed to doing whatever is necessary to create a great environment and to continue with this process.

I so appreciate your assistance and look forward to hearing back from you!

Deborah Hester

Hi Deborah,

Thank you for your email. It sounds as though you have a very busy household! Congratulations for wanting to sort out these issues with your dogs. It will take some time and patience, but you sound like caring people, which is a great start!

It's great that you have read the book, and are willing to put our advice into action, and I agree that it sounds like a dominance issue. It is very important that you and your husband, and your mother too, establish yourselves as the dominant figures in your home. The dogs must know that they are below all of you in the order of the pack. It is also important that you watch your dogs, decide who the dominant of the two is, and treat them appropriately. There is no need to do one of these things before the other; you should begin both as soon as you can.

I would also recommend that you and your husband start obedience training on a regular basis. Train the dogs separately, and give them one-on-one time with you every day.

Read the section in SitStayFetch on "2 Dogs in House" for some more helpful hints when dealing with more than one dog in the home.

As for Annie's barking at strangers and dogs walking by, try the reprimand method - when she barks, either spray her with a water pistol filled with cold water, or throw a

heavy blanket on her. Growl a guttural growl, and give her some time out. Do not yell, as this will have no effect. This, combined with your new status as head dog should result in a better behaved Annie.

I hope this information helps you Deborah. Good luck, and please let me know how you progress.

Kind regards

Daniel Stevens
Technical Support
www.sitstayfetch.net

Daniel,

I so appreciated the advice and found the materials extremely helpful, especially in working towards establishing myself as the "alpha".

I took your advice and hired a professional to assist with the training. We thought it best to actually separate the two first and train them separately so that when we brought them together we could more easily deal with any conflict.

This week has been the first time they have been together, in over a month, and so far we've had only one incident - it occurred the minute they were reintroduced.

What is apparent is that we've actually had to make Annie more of the alpha to build her confidence as the fighting occurred when Annie displayed fear and anxiety being in the presence of Molly. As a result, we've been putting Molly in a more submissive position and forcing both of them to constantly be together as well as putting them in situations where they have fought in the past.

It seems to be working but it is still very early in the process. It is so true what is referenced in your materials that you have to correctly pick the Alpha dog and we believe this is where our problem began -- we picked incorrectly.

Keep us in your thoughts! We are committed to doing whatever is necessary to keep everyone together and thank you for all of your assistance.

Sincerely,

Deborah Hestor

Letters to Daniel - Nervous Aggression

Dan

We have two dogs (male and female litter mates) that have just turned two years old. They are hound mixes (55lbs) and look very similar to a Walker Hound. We love them and have spent considerable time training and so on with 30 min. walks for them in the morning and evening each day.

We live in a city, in a house, in a residential neighborhood. We also just had a baby and Rose is 3 mo. old. The dogs seem to have adjusted fine; in fact there wasn't much adjustment.

Here's our problem. Both dogs have had an incident that involved a bite in the last month.

Harry the male, bit a little girl who approached on a scooter, when I was unaware, from behind. I had both dogs and the baby with me in a body pack type holder (baby Bjorn). He broke the skin a little. I was VERY concerned; her parents were very cool and didn't take any action towards us or the dogs.

Harry bit me once when he was a puppy and I tried to take a bone away, but we worked through that. In his first year as a puppy I once had him off leash outside the city where he ran after a rollerblader and snapped at her as well. He is scared of and lunges at skateboards and scooters and sometimes even joggers. General things that move fast and make noise.

I have been working with him to overcome his fear and things are getting much better. Bonnie, the female, today snipped at and nipped one of our nannies friends in the butt that came to the house when she was let out the door. This was unprovoked in any way and she has NEVER showed these types of signs of aggression being the submissive one of the pair. I saw it with my own eyes or I wouldn't have believed she did it. I was floored, although I think she was defending her territory and possible the baby too.

It's not practical for me to have muzzles on these dogs all the time and it's no life for them. I have to be able to trust them as our child gets older and more child-like activity take place around them with friends and comings and goings of busy family life.

Both dogs have reasonable obedience, although they do ignore us sometimes until we persist. They are not very good at stay, and I probably need to work putting them in that hold position more often.

Do you have any further questions for me that might help you give me some advice? I really don't want to loose my dogs, but I can't have them as a liability either. Children's safety certainly comes before pets; I'm just hoping to mesh both together. If I work at training them, can I trust them again in the future?

What type of training techniques would you suggest?

Paul

Hi Paul,

Thanks for your email. It sounds as though you have a very busy home life! Congratulations on the arrival of your new baby Rose.

I can understand that you might be concerned about the aggressive behaviors your hounds are displaying, especially when there are children involved.

It sounds as though both dogs are a bit jumpy in certain situations. The first thing I would recommend is that you read and use the techniques in the bonus book "Secrets to becoming the Alpha Dog". It is important that your dogs know that you and your partner are the Top Dogs. This will not only help with obedience, but should also help with any protection aggression issues that have arisen. If the dogs see that you, the Alpha, have trusted someone enough to invite them into your house, they should be more comfortable with their intrusion. There are some simple things you can do for a start, such as feeding the dogs after all of the humans have eaten, not allowing them on the furniture or beds, and making them go through doors after you.

I would suggest that if you are at all concerned, you should muzzle them while your visitors are present.

It is also a good idea to desensitize your dogs to things that might cause fear aggression - for example in Harry's case, noisy skateboarders. Practice obedience training at home, and when you are out walking, if you see a skateboarder, remain calm (they can easily sense your apprehension, which will increase his own tension), and get his attention by asking him to sit, or lie down. Reward him for paying attention to you and ignoring the skateboarder.

Have your friends help you with socializing Harry and Bonnie. Your dogs need to know that visitors are not a threat, but at the same time, it will be easier if your friends know techniques to use so that they don't unintentionally aggravate the situation. They should:

- Not directly approach the dogs at any time; this will only increase their anxieties
- Not stare Bonnie or Harry in their eyes, direct eye contact is intimidating. In the wild, if a dog stares another in the eyes, they are threatening them.
- If the dogs become agitated, let them into a quiet room

Good luck Paul, and please let me know how you progress.

Kind regards

Daniel Stevens
The SitStayFetch Team
www.sitstayfetch.net

Letters to Daniel - Aggressive with Children

Dear Daniel

I have just purchased and downloaded the SitStayFetch Book. And, I have looked through the section on aggressive behavior. And, I still have some concerns, and I would like to set out the problem below and, hopefully, hear back from you.

Buster is a mixed breed dog. He was found at the landfill by my sister's son-in-law. His mother and brothers and sisters had been taken to the pound and had evidently been put to sleep. Buster had gotten separated from the others and was caught between the wheels of a large truck.

When my sister called, we were only too glad to take him to raise. He was between 7 and 10 days old, and we bottle fed him. He had mites, very dry skin and a very, very dry coat. He is now 6 months old and is absolutely beautiful!! He is larger than we had hoped he would be (55 pounds).

He has a very sweet nature when meeting people and because of his beautiful, soft, silky coat, people want to touch him and pet him. And, he enjoys that.

The problem is with my grandchildren. Buster has bitten my youngest grandson, who just turned 4, twice. This happened the first time when Buster was about 3 months old and Mark went to him to pet him and love him when he arrived at my home. Mark had some food in his hand and Buster "attacked" him to get the food. I hollered "no," grabbed Mark and took the food from Buster.

It happened a second time when Buster was eating and Mark approached him to pet him. I again said "no" very loudly and removed Mark from the area, and took the food from Buster.

Since that time, he has growled a time or two at Mark, but not attempted to bite him. I always say "no" when he does this and remove whatever he may have at the time. It may be a toy, something he is chewing on or food.

Then, today, my daughter called and said she had gone by the house to pick up some mail. She had our 5 year old granddaughter with her. I had given Buster a "pig ear" purchased from the Pet store to chew on when we left for work. Kate (our daughter) lived with us for about 3 months and her girls were there all the time, so Buster knows them as part of the family. But, when Mary went over to Buster, he bit at her and when Kate said "no" to him and pulled Mary away, he initially went under a table in the den. Kate admonished Buster saying, "No, Buster. Bad dog. Don't bite." At this, Buster came out from under the table and growled at Kate, showing his teeth in a threatening way. Kate rolled up a magazine and pointed it at Buster and said "no, Buster, you don't do that." She then picked up her mail and got Mary and walked out the door.

Buster, who had been out in the yard (we leave him out when we are at work during the day), followed Kate out, wagging his tail and got in her car (he loves to ride) to go with her. Kate told him "no" and he got out of the car, but there were no further problems with him.

I am very concerned because Buster is a large dog and very powerful. But, we all love him so very much. I do not want to have to lose him, but I also do not want to put my children, grandchildren or anyone else in danger.

Would it be better for me to seek a family for Buster where there are no children, since it seems that the little ones are primarily his target (until today anyway) or can we train him and keep him safely with us?

I hate to think that he may have a "vicious" nature, and I simply cannot believe that is the case. I can take anything from Buster at any time as can my husband.

What would be best in our case, and what training methods in the book do you think would best be suited for Buster? Thanks for any help or advice you can give.

I also have a call in to my Vet. We had Buster neutered about a week ago, and I'm hoping that this will help some with his aggressive nature. He has about 40% Chow, some Lab and I do not what else he may have in him. He has a large thick tail with long silky hair that reminds me of a Retriever. And, he is solid black with long silky hair that is so soft to the touch it feels like you are touching a stuffed toy. This is why the kids and everyone else always wants to touch and pet him.

In any event, your help will be greatly appreciated.

Penny Brown

Hi Penny,

Thanks for your email. It sounds as though Buster was lucky to find your family! His aggression is a big concern for me, as I am sure it is for you. The issue seems to be one of dominance. It's likely that Buster has no problem letting you or your husband taking food or toys from him, because he sees you as higher than him in the hierarchy. However, when it comes to your Grandchildren, Buster thinks that his rank is higher, and therefore doesn't see why they should be allowed near his things.

So, the thing to do here is make sure your grandchildren know the techniques set out in the bonus book "Secrets to becoming the Alpha Dog". Have them practice these techniques with you, but to be safe, fit Buster with a muzzle. You should get Buster accustomed to wearing the Muzzle before you and your Grandchildren attempt this.

One of the easiest ways to establish rank is by making sure Buster goes through doors after your grandchildren (ask him to sit by the doorway, then once you and your

grandchildren have passed through, allow him to follow). Your husband and you should be practicing these techniques every day also. This is something you will need to do for every day of Busters life.

It is important that you not feel sorry for him and let him away with any kind of dominant behavior.

Be quick to reprimand for bad behavior! I would also advise you to ensure your grandchildren do not try to reprimand him - that is your job.

Do not let Buster onto the furniture, or to sleep in your bedroom, and certainly not on your bed!

It is also vitally important that you start obedience training, if you have not already! Make sure he gets plenty of exercise, and practice obedience with him for at least 15 mins a day. Use a reward based system for a start, to keep his attention during the initial learning phase, and then start to cut those back once you think he knows the commands. If he chooses not to respond, reprimand him by shaking a can of pebbles and growling at him.

If Buster is particularly possessive of certain toys, remove them altogether.

Make sure he is well socialized with children, but if you are concerned, have him wear his muzzle. Have the children offer him treats, though ask them to throw the treats to his feet as opposed to handing them to him.

I hope this information helps Penny. Good luck, and please let me know how you progress.

Kind regards

Daniel Stevens
The SitStayFetch Team
www.sitstayfetch.net

Recommended Reading: SitStayFetch

This hugely popular book is one of the easiest to follow dog obedience books on the market. It is jam-packed with information, including over 100 exclusive photos, and is instantly downloadable to your computer.

It deals with issues such as:

- Selecting, buying and raising a puppy or older dog,
- The best ways to care for your dog,
- The pro's and con's of all the training methods,
- How to understand your dog through body language, facial expressions and the impact of wolf instincts,
- Solving a wide range of dog problems. See the list further down!
- Basic and advanced commands and tricks to teach your dog,

In addition to this, Daniel Stevens has included his recommendation of the best and latest methods to train your dog, including the secrets behind dog whispering. Readers get the benefit of years of testing and refining of these methods for a very low cost!

Daniel gives techniques and programs to help deal with a huge variety of dog problems, including:

- Aggression,
- Biting, mouthing and nipping,
- Coprophagia (poop eating),
- Destructive behavior (chewing),
- Digging holes,
- Disobedience,
- Fear of the leash,
- Fighting between dogs,
- Nuisance barking,
- Off-leash problems,
- Thieving,
- Travel problems,
- Having more than one dog in the house,
- A death in the family,
- Bad breath,
- Cat chasing,

- Flatulence,
- Hot weather and heatstroke,
- Jealousy,
- Jumping on furniture and people,
- Separation anxiety,
- Worms.

The dog training package also includes 5 bonuses when you buy the book. These include 4 mini e-books titled:

- Dog Grooming Made Easy
- Tips On How To Security Train Your Dog
- All The House Training Methods And Tricks
- Secrets To Becoming The Alpha Dog

In addition to the four bonus books is the bonus of a free online consultation to customers who may have specific problems or concerns to address.

This book is one of the most comprehensive dog books available, and is one of the top selling dog obedience books on the market. Daniel Stevens deals with every issue of dog ownership. He removes the frustration and rapidly increases the speed of dog training.

This package, with book, 4 bonus books and online consultation is a complete package that can cater for all dog owners and the training problems they face.

Purchase online at <http://www.sitstayfetch.net/>