

### How to use socialization and training to reduce the chances a dog will bite

A well trained dog is no accident! Follow these tips to have a well socialized pet that does not bite.

- \* Socialize your dog starting the day you bring him/ her home, so that it feels safe and at ease with people of all ages and types and appearances, and with other dogs, and in diverse situations. Include your dog on family outings.
- \* Expose your dog to a variety of situations gradually and under controlled circumstances. Be cautious; do not put your dog in a position where he feels threatened. Teach him to not be nervous in these situations.
- \* Train your dog so she knows how to behave, and so you can manage her behavior at all times. Teach the basic commands "sit," "stay," "down," "no" , and "come" to build a bond of obedience and trust. Dogs are not born knowing how to act in the human world. They depend on their owners to teach them how to behave.
- \* Make sure every member of your household learns and then practices the same training techniques, and participates in the dog's education.
- \* Obedience class is a good way to socialize your dog.
- \* Earn your dog's respect through consistent and positive training, protecting your dog from potential threats indoors and outside and responsible management.
- \* Reward your dog for listening and for respectful, responsive behaviors.
- \* Encourage trusting behaviors such as having your dog roll over and let you scratch his belly, and allowing you to touch his paws.
- \* Vaccinate dogs against rabies, make sure they are regularly examined by vets, keep them healthy and well-fed, and be alert to any change in behavior. Sick dogs and those in pain are more prone to biting.
- \* Neuter and spay your dog. Studies show that unneutered male dogs have a higher tendency to roam, show territoriality and display some types of aggression than their neutered counterparts.
- \* Understand the breed traits of your dog, and read extensively about dogs before getting a dog.

- \* Be alert. Know your dog. Learn to understand her body language - posture, expressions, ear and tail positions that can signal when she is upset, frightened or over-excited.
- \* Do not teach a dog any aggressive behaviors and beware of inadvertently rewarding such behaviors. Don't wrestle or play rough games. If playing tug of war, make sure you always win and that you determine when to start and finish the game. Realize that dogs use play to establish rank in a relationship. The human should always act as leader.
- \* Do not encourage guarding behavior in a dog. This usually backfires. Just having a dog is enough to discourage unwanted visitors, so you do not have to teach the dog to "guard" or "protect" your family and property. Encouraging such behavior can lead to a troubled and anxious dog, aggression and bites.
- \* Be a responsible dog owner. Always use a leash outside (when not in a fully fenced yard) and keep your dog from approaching other people and animals. When in a yard, make sure the fence is of adequate height, and supervise the dog when he's outside. Remember, proper supervision and management can prevent most dog bites.
- \* Give your dog enough exercise. Exercise relieves stress in dogs and gives them a positive outlet for their energy.
- \* Spend time with your dog. Dogs are social animals. Those frequently left alone have a greater tendency to develop behavior problems.
- \* Do not confine dogs in non-family areas such as dark basements or garages, since being with the pack is necessary for maintaining a well-socialized canine.
- \* Keeping a pet happy, healthy and well-supervised is key to avoiding problems. Remember, it's always better to avoid the development of problem than to have to solve them later.