Dealing With Aggressive Dogs

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Approaching Dogs

All strange dogs must be treated with caution and a person should not approach or stroke a dog unless invited to do so by its owner. Then the dog must be approached slowly, allowing time for it to sniff the person or make friendly contact with them. Crouching down, speaking to the dog gently, avoiding eye contact, and patting around the chest or neck region are all non-threatening actions. If the person is crouching, their face must be kept well clear of the dog's face. Approaching suddenly, bending over the dog or patting it on the head or back are dominant and threatening gestures and may cause a dog to react by biting. Each dog has a different social and personal distance that a stranger is permitted to enter. This is why a dog that is tied up outside a shop may snap or bite when someone tries to pat it. The dog cannot escape when there is a sudden invasion of its personal space.

If Threatened

Many dog bites are the result of people reacting wrongly when they are approached or threatened by a dog.

The initial reaction should be to stop and remain completely still. Eye contact with the dog should be avoided and it should be spoken to gently.

A command such as "sit" or "stay" can be given softly to the
dog because many will obey these. All threatening gestures such as yelling at the dog, waving one's arm or rushing at it should be avoided. In some circumstances these actions can scare a dog away, but other dogs may react by attacking. Unless the person has the skills, experience and the equipment to deal with this, any reaction that may accentuate the dog's aggression is not advisable. Erratic nervous movements or screaming will also cause the dog to advance further. Crouching to reduce one's body size may relax some dogs, but any movements must be made slowly and deliberately. An article of clothing can be carefully removed and used take the first bite if the dog suddenly lunges.

If the dog relaxes the person should back away slowly. Turning and running are signals for the dog to chase and attack. Most people are bitten moving away from a dog when they turn and run. If the incident occurs outside or near the dog's home it is important for the person threatened to gradually increase the distance from where the dog lives, as dogs are usually less aggressive on neutral ground.

If Attacked

If you believe it is a full on attack reach down and pick up a hand full of stones, shingle or whatever and throw it at the dog.

If that fails grab your clip board or briefcase or whatever, and offer it to the dog keeping it well away from your body. If the dog is truly aggressive he will grab the object and hold on, do not let go of the object, if you do he will soon realise that it is not you and will likely attack again.

Normally after he realises he is having little or no effect he will stop the attack (or at least give you time to plan your next move).

Only strike the dog as a last resort, when a dog is in attack mode pain can incite them more.

Never try to kick the dog when he is facing you (it's reported that a dog can bite ten times before we can respond.
If you are knocked to the ground remain motionless in the foetal position, and protect your face by crossing your arms above your head.

### Entering Properties

- Where possible advise the dog owner of your visit and ask them to tie any dogs up.
- Where possible make your entrance in a vehicle, this is the way most dogs see their owners and friends arrive.
- Before walking onto the property, check for signs that a dog may live there, such as bones, a dog kennel, chewed up articles or dog droppings.
- When entering a property, rattle the gate or make a noise calling or whistling the dog etc.
- If the dog comes, greet him as a long lost friend, and if he responds to you and you are confident, enter the property.
- When a property is entered the gate should be closed, but not latched until it is known where the dog is and whether it is friendly or not.
- If there is barking but it does not get any closer after a reasonable time, we can assume the dog is tied up or behind a back fence.
- Walk in confident manner, dogs do not smell fear, but they are very good at reading body language, (jerky nervous movements etc).
- If a dog approaches you try and understand his posture. If he is alert but not aggressive, greet him (perhaps turning side on to present a less imposing figure) let him sniff you but don't stop, just carry on walking perhaps avoiding excessive eye contact. Remember to keep a weary eye behind you.
- If you come across a sleeping dog, back off and try to waken him at a safe distance and begin the greeting procedure.
- Avoid walking close to the walls of the house as you may surprise a sleeping dog.
- If a dog appears to be chained up, do not assume that the chain is attached, or it may be longer than you think.
or even break. Remember dogs are more aggressive when tied up.

- If a dog is hiding or lying on a doorstep give him room to escape. Beware! the fear biter.
- If the owner is about ask them to tie the dog up. Beware! The statement "its alright he won't hurt you". All dogs will bite given the right circumstances.
- When knocking at a door stand well back, if there is a dog inside the owner may not be quick enough to prevent the dog biting you.
- Never assume that because a dog's tail is wagging he won't bite, it can mean indecision on the dogs part, and they seldom hurt you with that end.
- When leaving the property be careful, this is when most attacks occur, preferably back off and put something between you and the dog.
- Never run unless you can beat the dog to a safe haven, this is a sure way to incite an attack.

Dogs In Cars

A dog will usually defend it's owner's car vigourously. As a result many people are bitten when they walk too close to a car, or when they put their hand through an open window to pat the dog. Passers-by should refrain from tapping on car windows as this only aggravates the dog inside and increases the likelihood of it biting the next person who approaches the car.

Children And Dogs

When children are bitten by the family dog, parents must consider carefully the circumstances leading up to the incident before overreacting and having the dog destroyed. It is better to prevent the situation from occurring by training both the dog and child to behave appropriately when with each other.

Most bites are inhibited nips and serve to warn the child that the dog does not like what the child was doing to it. Children must be taught to respect a dog's right to eat and sleep without being disturbed and not to torment, tease or cause the dog pain.
Parents should never leave dogs alone with babies or young children, whether the children are their own or from outside the family group. A child's behaviour is very different to an adult's, so dog owners must socialise their dogs to both children and adults from an early age. Dogs can easily be frightened or feel threatened by the quick movements and the level of noise that children make.

The dog will be less tolerant with non-family members. Unfortunately children tend to treat all dogs in the same way and if they can hug their own dog, steal its bone or push it around, then they may do it to other dogs. Many children get bitten finding out that they cannot.

**Interactions With Dog Owners**

A sudden movement by a person or the passing of an object towards its owner when the dog is nearby or in between, can be perceived by a dog as a threat to its owner. The dog may misunderstand the context of the interaction and react by biting or lunging at the other person. This situation often occurs when children and their friends are playing with the dog.