

## Biting, Aggressive dogs - how to handle them

There are many reasons why a dog may behave aggressively but there are only two characteristic groups of biting dogs. The chances of being bitten can be reduced by recognizing the behaviour type and adopting appropriate responses. Dogs do not smell fear but do read body language.

The first group is the fear biter. 90% of biters belong to this group. Generally these dogs feel threatened.

The second group is the brave biter. 10% of biters belong to this group. Generally these dogs want to establish dominance.

These two groups of biters must be dealt with differently, so it is important to be able to tell them apart.

Fear biters characteristically behave in the following ways:

- \* Fear biters act angrily.
- \* They bare their teeth a lot.
- \* They are usually crouching down.
- \* They try to get around to one side of you or circle you.
- \* They may lunge in and out, trying to bite on the run.

Fear biters usually will not bite if you adopt the following stance:

- \* Stop walking or running.
- \* Face the dog with your eyes and body.
- \* If the dog lunges in or tries to circle, pivot with your feet to keep facing him.
- \* If he tries to bite, tell him "NO" in a stern voice.
- \* If you are carrying something, keep it between you and the dog.
- \* If the owner arrives, do not take your eyes off the dog.
- \* If the dog is persistent, walk backwards slowly and carefully until you are out of its territory.

It is most important that you do not turn your back, run or scream. All of these submissive acts will encourage the dog to continue its attack.

Brave biters characteristically behave in the following way:

- \* They seldom act angrily.
- \* They will always keep their ears up and tail held high.
- \* They prance proudly when they approach you and stand erect.
- \* They do not try to circle.
- \* They may wag their tail while held high.
- \* And put their paws on you.

Encounters with brave biters should be handled in the following manner:

- \* Stop walking and try to relax.
- \* Turn your body slightly so you are not facing the dog head on.
- \* Fold your arms or keep them up by your chest.
- \* If he stands up on you do not try to push him down.
- \* **STAND STILL!**
- \* If the dog walks away, slowly and carefully walk away also, but keep an eye on the dog without facing it or making eye contact.

The brave biter will probably sniff your crotch area, shoes or pants and then leave. He may do this more than once.

Do not try to pet the dog because you may transmit signs of dominance which the dog will resent or you may bother a hidden injury.

## SUMMARY

Dogs rarely bite without some warning or initial contact.

## BE AWARE!

Remember dogs bite because they feel threatened or they think one of their family is threatened. If a dog chases you, do not run. Dogs also bite because they feel challenged. Avoid these circumstances.

Above all, do not rely on the owner to control the dog. You must not ignore the dog. Decide what type it is - a fear biter or a brave biter, and adopt the appropriate stance.

Contact your local council

You can help your council protect the public by reporting cases of people harassing dogs and dogs harassing people. If minor incidents are reported, major incidents can be prevented.