Family dog bites are preventable

Research Objectives

The Center for Canine Behavior Studies (CCBS) is a Connecticut-USA not-for-profit 501c3 company that undertakes canine behavior research to better understand human–canine interactions that sustain or break bonds. Particular focus has addressed canine aggression, its causes and treatments, and human-directed education that will reduce the risk of family dog bites – particularly to children.

References

- Center for Canine Behavior Studies, centerforcaninebehaviorstudies.org
- Pet Statistics, aspca.org
- Animal bites, who.int
- American Pet Products Association, americangreentools.org

Bio

- Nicholas H Dodman, veterinary behaviorist, co-founder, CEO and president
- Chris J Janelli, co-founder and board chairman
- Robin Grimm, PhD, project director
- Victoria Stilwell, expert dog trainer and TV star
- Vivian Zottola MS, human–animal relationship specialist
- Nahid Shirzadkhah MS, creative and artwork contributor
- Allie Tellier, executive director
- Ian Dinwoodie MS, informatics expert and statistician
- Child Development experts – Tufts University
- FableVision – children’s educational media production
Family dog bites are preventable

Family dogs are our best friends but can bite when feeling imposed upon, threatened, or afraid. By learning and respecting what dogs do and do not like and how they communicate their concerns, we can avoid triggering a reactionary bite. Led by world-renowned veterinarian Dr. Nicholas H. Dodman, Professor Emeritus, Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, USA, Be BiteSmart aims to support families in learning to recognize a dog’s behavior and signals that often precede a reactionary bite. Learning this will contribute to a safe and loving environment.

Dogs are our best friends. Dogs are marvelously innocent, vivacious, funny, and affectionate creatures. We domesticated dogs thousands of years ago to protect, entertain, and work for us. They continue to do all of those things, but now in an accepted capacity as a ‘family member’.

DOGS ARE NOT HUMANS

We have a lot in common with dogs; they seem so human at times and we often treat them that way, but they are nonetheless still dogs who sense the world and communicate in different ways to us. As such, behaviors that our children might consider engaging and friendly may be perceived by the dog in very different ways — and the dog may become agitated, potentially causing a serious injury.

BEING FOREWARNED IS BEING FOREARMED

Family dogs are loyal, loving, social animals, but when they bite — particularly young children who may inadvertently provoke them — to protect themselves, they often do not feel well either. Family dogs that bite are likely to be relinquished to shelters, where they are at risk of being euthanized. Some are even destroyed at the scene if they are deemed unsafe. There are far too many avoidable dog deaths and bite injuries to children over than provided but preventable interactions.

Studies suggest that tens of millions of people are bitten by dogs each year, and although most dog bites are non-fatal, some do kill, and non-fatal injuries can leave both physical and mental scars. A bite can cause lasting fear and anxiety. Many bites go unreported so there is no accurate global estimate. But according to the World Health Organization, in the United States, approximately 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs every year. Of these, nearly 855,000 seek medical care; 3-18% develop infections; 30,000 require reconstructive surgical procedures and between 10 and 20 fatalities occur.

Biting incidents can be traumatizing, frightening, even life-altering events for dogs and their families. Dogs usually give all sorts of warning signs prior to a bite — both through sound and body language. Education and awareness in both adults and children can avoid these dog-related disasters. So, let’s reduce the risk of these tragedies happening. Being forewarned is being forearmed.

Be BiteSmart (BBS) is a human-animal education initiative to encourage and help families learn how a dog communicates through body language and sound, how to interpret his body and behaviors, and how to interact with a dog. Be BiteSmart will help children to avoid situations and expressions. The initial series is intended for young children (toddler to preschoolers) to watch with their parents. Alex and Charlie then become part of a growing multimedia suite with age-appropriate augmented reality and gaming for children of all ages.

ENSURING DOGS HAVE A HOME FOR LIFE

Education and respect for our dogs’ likes, dislikes, and behavioral responses are vital across all age groups. All dog parents and children need to be equipped with age-appropriate knowledge to pick up on the warning signs that dogs give when they feel threatened or offended. By helping our children and our dogs to understand each other better, the risk of injury can be substantially reduced, allowing family dogs to live happily and safely with us all.

KEEPING CHILDREN AND DOGS SAFE

Be BiteSmart provides a vital resource for everyone, educating children and adults alike in how to correctly interact with their dogs to prevent bites. Be BiteSmart will be free, easy accessible, and a simple and engaging way to learn all that we need to know about dog communication.

www.BiteSmart.org

Researchoutreach.org