

## **Common Influences on aggression**

### Diet

Feed only an all-natural diet. Foods and treats with artificial colorings and preservatives can cause irritability, hyperactivity and allergic reaction. Innova, California Natural and Merrick are 3 examples of all natural foods - there are many others.

### Hormones

Neutering is highly recommended in a male dog that has shown aggression. Neutering will tend to decrease territorial aggression. Spaying a female dog will often decrease hormonal surges and emotional conditions such as false pregnancies.

### Exercise

Exercise releases endorphins, which have a calming effect. An under exercised dog will be frustrated and edgy.

### Heredity

Genetics play a large part in aggression. Discuss your dog's behavior with your breeder. When choosing a dog consider the personality of the parents and if possible, past offspring. Choose a friendly puppy not a shy or feisty pup.

### Socialization

Dogs are naturally wary of novel things. Systematically exposing your dog to new people, places, sounds etc over rides that natural wariness and creates a safe, confident dog. Dogs who get minimal exposure to the outside world as they are developing will often become fearful and therefore aggressive toward new people, dogs etc.

### Relationship with owner

Dog ownership means leadership. A benevolent leader is responsible for keeping his/her charges safe and cared for through control and supervision. Rules need to be patiently established and consistently enforced.

1. Resources - Toys, bones and food dishes belong to YOU. Teach your dog to release items from his mouth when asked through a reward program. Hand feed your dog for a period of time to establish that all food comes from your hands.
2. No Free Lunch - Require a Sit or Down (or any other behavior your dog knows) before he gets anything he likes. This includes meals, treats, games, walks, petting, attention etc etc. Ask twice then put the item away or walk away from the activity for two minutes before asking again.
3. Obedience train your dog using positive methods. Avoid punishment based training methods. Punishment will only create fear, which often leads to aggression.
4. Restrict movement through out your home using gates or closed doors. Do not allow your dog on furniture unless you want him there AND he will get off when asked.

### Fear of Handling

Some dogs will become snappy when handled, simply out of fear. Make your dog comfortable with handling by pairing the handling with yummy treats. For example if your dog does not like his feet being touched, let him nibble a piece of cheese while you gently touch his foot briefly. Build up to touching for longer or picking up the foot. Go slowly! Watch your dog's body language for signs of stress. Do not push him to the point of growling or snapping! This may take months, but it is worth it.

### Environmental Stimuli

Some dogs become aggressive only in certain circumstance, where certain stimuli are presented. You can simply avoid those situations when possible. For example I once owned a dog that would become aggressive (guarding) if given a real meat bone. She did not guard any other object or bone. I simply made the decision to never give her a real meat bone again. If your dog goes crazy attacking your window when he sees a cat outside you could simply restrict his movement in your home so that he wasn't able to look out the window.

### Health

Illness or injury may cause your dog to act aggressively. A thorough veterinary exam may be needed.