

# ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

## Behavior Problems

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

We need to remember that many actions we find undesirable in our dogs are instinctive or they are "tricks" we have inadvertently taught them.

**Chewing** is a normal behavior for dogs, especially for puppies that are teething. You **MUST** provide toys for dogs to chew such as balls, latex squeak toys, and rawhide chews. One of the best toys is called the "KONG Tuffy Chew Toy." This toy is hollow and can be stuffed with treats, peanut butter, etc. Starting the "Kong Habit" now can prevent problems that occur simply out of boredom, the root of many destructive behavior disorders.

**Digging** is another normal behavior that can get out of control and become a problem. This is especially true for dogs that are bored and for many terriers that were bred to dig. This digging urge can usually be redirected by giving the dog a spot where he **IS** allowed to dig. Bury something really wonderful there such as a very smelly stuffed KONG and watch your dog go to town! He will most likely continue to dig in this area, especially if it's the only spot he ever finds anything. If he digs in other areas, you may try burying chicken wire a few inches below the ground. Another reason he may be digging is because of the heat. Make sure he has a cool place to go.

**Barking** is another instinct that becomes a behavior problem in bored animals. Again, providing lots of entertainment is a great means of prevention. Teach your dog to be quiet on command. Allow him two or three warning barks when appropriate, then tell him, "Enough!" or "Quiet!" and when he is quiet for a few seconds, praise him.

If your dog **jumps on you**, ignore the dog, and turn your back to him until he stops jumping. Then give him the cue "sit" and praise him lavishly for sitting. **Never** pet your dog when he jumps on you! The dog will learn that sitting, not jumping, pays off.

You should teach your dog to "share" his food to avoid **food aggression**. This can be done by taking the food bowl away frequently when they are young and add special treats then returning the food bowl to them. Also, toss some special treats in the bowl each

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time you walk by. The idea behind this is that the dog learns that great tasting tidbits are the result of people being around his food bowl.

Avoid playing games that encourage your **puppy to nip you**.

However, this is a normal behavior and we must instill bite inhibition in our dogs. Let your puppy know his teeth hurt by yelling, "OUCH!" and discontinuing any interaction. After you turn away and ignore him a few times, he should get the message. **NEVER** hit or grab your puppy. This can result in fear, potentially leading to aggressive behavior.

Boredom is a common cause of many behavior problems. Stimulation, companionship, and training can prevent most problems. Take your dog for several walks a day or at least play games such as fetch. The more you include him in your family, the better pet he will be.

Remember three main steps: Say "No" to stop the unwanted behavior. Substitute an item to chew or show the desired behavior. Praise the desired behavior.

If you have any questions please call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 📞