

An article in Marlborough Town & Country about dog aggression

In February 2008, the BBC reported that NHS statistics showed, on average, a 40% increase in people being treated in A&E following dog attacks.

This was over a 4 year period bringing the total to almost 3,800 a year. During the same period in London, the number of patients under 18 doubled and in the West Midlands it rose by 80%.

In May 2009, the largest world study on Dog Behaviour and Aggression to date was published by the University of Cordoba. The findings? Approximately 40% of dominance aggression in dogs is associated with a lack of authority on the part of the owner.

As we seem to be moving into a culture that is turning politically correct with our dogs, rather than addressing our dogs basic animal needs, we need to ask ourselves "Are we, by allowing our dogs to live with us as friends and equals; with free access to furniture and bedrooms; without enforcing old fashioned common sense rules; contributing to the increase in the national bite statistics?"

Local dog behaviour specialist Lez Graham says "As a dog behaviourist and a mother, this is a matter that I feel very passionate about. I've watched parents and schools lose the power to apply discipline and I've watched children suffer because of it. This "you can't say NO" brigade have turned their politically correct attention to dogs, and not only will the dog suffer but so will the families that home them."

Lez explains "for me, with dogs, it's about self respect... I'm not going to allow my dogs to jump all over me, hurt me and my family, steal food and destroy my home. I expect them to be respectful of my personal space – it doesn't mean I don't love them and they don't love me, it just means I have boundaries and they know it... when you have boundaries you don't need to tell your dog what it can and can't do all the time, you just need to remind it occasionally"

It has been shown that dogs that are trained properly, handled appropriately and are not pampered do not normally retain aggressive dominance behaviour whereas failing to train your dog and not applying discipline when required will contribute to the levels of aggression.

And aggression isn't the only problem that not having boundaries for your dog can cause; how about not coming when called, pulling on the lead, being destructive, generally ignoring you and lacking control as well as barking excessively (which is a form of aggression) to name just a few...

Having a behaviour modification consultation in your home is more expensive than going to dog training classes, however, for owners that have dogs with issues it's worth every penny... most insurance companies recognise full members of the Canine & Feline Behaviour Association of Great Britain (CFBA) and if you're referred by your vet you may be able to use your pet insurance for the consultation.

See www.cfba.co.uk or www.trainedforlife.co.uk for more information.