

BITE INHIBITION

Client Information Series

Biting and mouthing of people is one of the most common behavioral problems of puppies. Proper training at an early age will help eliminate these problems.

Well-behaved dogs are “made not born.” By this we mean that just as a pup must be taught how to sit, stay, come, etc. they also must learn how to be “polite” with their mouths.

As with any training regimen **consistency** is one of the most important factors involved. All members of the household must use the same commands and have the same rules for the puppy. Also you must consider the pup’s temperament. A more submissive, shy pup will need a milder correction than a pup that is more self-assured. Hitting or grabbing the muzzle should be avoided as this may lead to the pup become “hand shy.”

Two methods are used to accomplish biting inhibition. The first involves “**yelping**” loudly as if in pain as soon as the pup bites. This usually startles the pup and stops the unwanted behavior. Immediately offer the pup a favorite toy to chew on. This redirects the biting urge onto an acceptable object. If a “yelp” isn’t quite enough a simple “flick” on the nose may be used along with it.

A second method involves **stopping play** and ignoring the pup when its behavior becomes inappropriate. Simply turn your back on the pup and offer a reward of praise when the pup settles down.

“**Tug of War**” games and **roughhousing** should not be encouraged. Such activities can encourage aggressive use of the mouth and teeth. Puppies need to be taught at an early age to allow objects to be taken from their mouths and to have their mouths examined. Practice removing objects while using a command such as “give” or “mine.” Reward the pup with praise or a treat when the object is released. Regularly open your pup’s mouth and pull back the lips to accustom them to having their mouth handled.

Proper training at an early age will produce a lifetime of enjoyable memories for you and your pet.

For more information on this and other behavior topics we recommend the booklet “**Puppy Primer**” available here at our clinic.

“Caring for your pets...as if they were our own”