



Pets Deserve Loving Homes ~ Loving Homes Deserve Pets

Children & Puppies

There is a big difference between a child's body language and adults. Children are much more unpredictable in their movements, they run suddenly and without warning, they yell, scream, fall and wave their arms around in play. Children lack the concept of personal space that dogs rely on and are so aware of.

Often young children are mouthed when attempting to pet a dog or puppy, this is mainly caused by the level of excitement from the child and the fast, erratic petting that tends to increase the puppy's excitement levels. If the puppy does make contact, the child usually responds by pulling the hand away quickly and making high pitched noises and fast movements. Below are a few ways we can help children and puppies to ensure their interactions are calm and enjoyed by both parties.

Supervision

Children should always be supervised during any interactions with their puppy; it only takes a second for unwanted interactions to take place. Proper supervision and management ensures that both your child and puppy grow up happy and safe together.

Management

Puppies and children can be a challenge to raise together as both are young, impulsive and still learning the rules of life. In times when you know the energy level is going to be difficult for your puppy to remain well behaved, remove him from the situation BEFORE something happens. Redirect his attention to an interactive toy or chew. X pens, baby gates and crates can be used to separate rambunctious children from a lively puppy.

Calm Interactions

Teach your child to behave how you want your puppy to behave; if we interact with puppies excitedly we can teach them to behave over the top during interactions, they can learn this from specific people if the majority of the interactions are always too excited. Children should learn to interact with puppies calmly and gently so the puppy learns to do the same.

Approach

Children should be taught to approach a dog calmly and to wait for the dog to invite interaction once he is near. If the child approaches and you see multiple calming or warning signals the dog is asking the child not to approach.

Running

Children running around dogs is never a good idea, this can invite chasing, nipping and jumping that can hurt the child. It also increases the dog's arousal levels which in turn can initiate rough play from the dog. If there are going to be a lot of children running around the house, move the dog into a different area and redirect his attention onto a toy.

Touching & Petting

Children tend to pet excitedly and focus around the dog's head, if the dog mouths the hand or the child pulls her hand away this can be seen as an invitation for play from the puppy and a game of mouthing can begin. The situation can quickly become out of control as the puppy becomes more and more aroused.

Children should avoid petting the puppies head and kissing, hugging or placing the face close together and these behaviours should always be discouraged as most dogs do not like their space invaded.

Children should instead let the puppy sniff their hand and then the child can pet the puppy gently from the back of the neck to the base of the tail or under the chin/neck area always in calm, slow strokes. If the puppy begins to use his mouth, the child should be instructed to stop petting at the first sign of teeth and calmly walk away.

Quiet Zone

Set up an area of your house, like a kennel or comfortable bed that is a quiet zone, meaning that when your dog goes there no one in the house can bother the dog; this includes calling them off the area, talking to, or petting. This allows the dog to get away if he is starting to feel a little bit overwhelmed. Explain to the child that his crate is his room, his private space, and he should be left alone when he is in it.

In addition, when you see your dog or puppy getting up and moving away from your child and she keeps going over to the puppy, you should intervene. This is the dogs message that he doesn't want to play. Also, do not allow your child to chase the puppy when he's trying to get away.

Train

Make sure that your child is part of the training program that your puppy is on. Once the puppy knows a command teach the child the cues as well, this way you can set up training session so that puppy learns to respond to young humans as well. Be sure that during training sessions the puppy does not jump for a treat as this can inadvertently reinforce jumping/mouthing behaviour.

Ask for an Incompatible Behaviour

Puppies and adolescents seem to go through “witching hours” where they are balls of energy and seemingly look for trouble to get into! This often is displayed with rough play which includes jumping, mouthing and over arousal. When your pup begins to play inappropriately ask for an incompatible behaviour. For jumping and mouthing you could use sit, down or place. Your puppy cannot jump if he is in a down.

If your puppy has “witching hour” on a regular schedule be proactive and redirect that extra energy to an appropriate outlet.

Additional Resources Available at Norms Nook, CAHS store

Living With Kids And Dogs Without Losing Your Mind – Colleen Pelar
www.livingwithkidsanddogs.com