

# "CHILDREN & PUPPIES"

One of the most precious gifts our puppies give us is the joy they bring to the lives of children. Children and puppies are drawn to each other through their energy and their mutual desire to play. We are so fortunate that these two lovely species want to interact. Now that they want to interact, it's our job to teach them how to do it safely.



## Statistics to Consider...

Today, children between the ages of 5 and 9 are at the highest risk of being bitten by their own dog or one that is familiar to them.

- The greatest risk is between 4 and 8 pm;
- Bites mostly happen:
  - o when children are interacting with dogs (playing, feeding, disturbing, etc.)
  - o when there is no interaction (running by the dog, wrestling with friends, etc.)
- Statistics support the importance of supervision. **No infant, toddler or child should be left alone with a puppy/dog.**
- If you can't be there to supervise, bring puppy with you and keep him busy with toys and the like.
- By following our guidelines, you will start to teach each species how to interact safely with the other and you will desensitize your puppy to the beautiful, carefree antics of children.
- Remember...even the most loving families have had to abandon their dogs due to bites. Let's make sure this never happens to your family as it's devastating for everyone.

## Why we need to be proactive with this..

Puppies are not small children and should not be treated as small children.

- Dogs live by a set of rules that differ from humans. They like to wrestle, nip and control the movement of their littermates but this is not something we want done with children.
- When puppies do this with children, it is not with ill intent. It is simply because they have not been taught what is acceptable with the other species.

Children see many similarities between their soft, cuddly stuffies and their puppies. Of course, they are very different.

- We must teach our children what is acceptable in a way that nurtures this new relationship.

## Using Calm Energy...

- When doing this exercise, you must be calm and content while interacting with puppy.
- Frustration, dominance and anger will cause puppy to feel anxious when children play.
- Our goal is to expose, control excitement or build confidence, redirect and de-arouse.

## Body Language Signals...

Refer to your body language booklet to see how your dog feels about children playing.

### **Insecure (we must build puppy's comfort level and confidence through exercise)**

Pages 4, 5, 6(middle), 10(middle/bottom), 11(top/bottom), 12(bottom), 13, 15(middle), 18(bottom), 19(top), 21(top/bottom), 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28 (top), 29(middle/bottom), 30(bottom)

### **Excited (we must control excitement through exercise)**

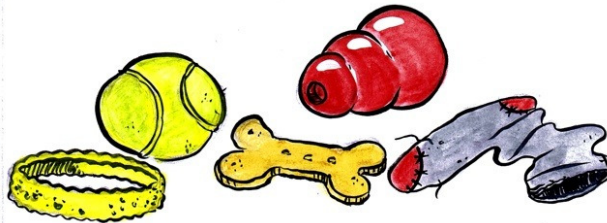
Pages 8(middle/bottom), 9(bottom), 10(top), 12(top), 14, 25(top), 27(middle/bottom)

**Aggression:** Pages 15(bottom), 16 (top/middle)  
*Hands on assistance from dog trainer required!*

**With all these indicators, children will never receive bites if adults are supervising!**

## Exercise

1. Have a pocket full of treats and place puppy on leash.
2. Ask children to play nearby at a low level of intensity while you interact with puppy.
3. Monitor puppy's body language to see how puppy reacts to this level of play.
4. If puppy is not reacting in any way, slightly increase the intensity of play between children.
5. When puppy either shows concern or interest in the play, start to re-direct him by doing some of the following exercises daily:
  - a. Say his name & reward with treat as soon as puppy looks at you.
  - b. Ask him to come & reward with treat as soon as he comes.
  - c. Ask him to sit & reward with treat as soon as he sits.
  - d. Ask him to lie down & reward with treat as soon as he lies down.
  - e. Say `watch me` & reward with treat as soon as he looks at you.
6. Walk puppy on leash in a circle around the children who are playing and re-direct his attention to you as you walk by calling his name in a happy voice and rewarding with a treat when he looks at you. If he's too distracted by the children, increase distance by walking in a larger circle.
7. Play with puppy on the sidelines with his favourite toys.
8. If your puppy shows signs of insecurity while children are playing, you must ask children to play at an intensity that is lower. Then, ask the children to approach the puppy calmly and quietly, sit just beyond where the leash reaches and ask the puppy to come. Children can reward the puppy with a treat and a gentle touch at that time. This should only be done once or twice during play session. By doing this, we're making playtime a positive experience for puppy.



## Tips & Bits

- Exercise should be done no more than once a day and only for 5 to 10 minutes per session.
- If puppy won't interact with you, the level of play is too intense and his arousal or concern is too high.
- Ask children to play at lower level of intensity and only increase the intensity at puppy's pace.
- Exercise should be done even if you don't have children. Ask relatives and neighbours if children can play this exercise game with you. If this is not possible, attend a park or other setting where children are playing and do exercise on the sideline. If puppy is not fully vaccinated, bring a blanket for puppy to stay on.
- Start this exercise within a week of puppy entering the home and continue daily until puppy is 12 weeks of age. After that, you can lower the session to 2 or 3 times per week.
- Children should interact daily with puppy as stated in The Happy Puppy Training Kit by doing fun exercises with them, playing appropriate game with them and simply touching them gently.

## The Next Level

- Work at your puppy's pace when increasing the level on intensity of play between children.
- If your puppy regresses, the level is too high.
- We ultimately want puppy not to be fearful or feel the need to jump into a play session when children are playing together.
- We want puppy to stay calm and watch from the sidelines.