

Bite Inhibition

Beth Bradley

Bite Inhibition is defined as the ability of a dog to control the pressure of the bite in order to cause minimal or no damage. In my opinion the definition of bite inhibition should include the option of leaving or the dog removing himself from the situation should he feel the need to bite.

Bite Inhibition with Puppies:

Bite inhibition is usually taught by the Dam. Initially, a puppy that feeds too rough or hard soon realizes that the 'meal' will walk away. Eventually, the mother will grab a puppy that feeds too hard to get her point across. The same happens with litter mates, playing too hard and the other puppy no longer wants to play and ends the game. Eventually, the other puppy will fight back

Once you adopt or purchase your puppy, it is up to you to continue to train the bite inhibition. Initially, game over will work but most puppies then have to go to a form or correction. The type and intensity depends on the dog's intensity. A good trainer will be able to tell you which correction will work best.

Bite Inhibition with Adult Dogs

Bite Inhibition with Adult Dogs is more difficult to eradicate. First, the habit has been formed and second, you have to decide if it is rough play or full out aggression. Full out aggression, even though it may only be a growl or snap must be trained with a professional. I teach my clients that their dog has a choice to move away instead of using it's mouth. Keep in mind, this training will work for anyone the dog has respect for, not children, friends, neighbors, or other dogs. Dogs without bite inhibition, even though trained must be locked away when people or children are visiting, especially when you can't have your 100% attention on your dog. Dogs with only bone aggression may be fine with you, but if he is chewing a bone and someone comes over, there can always be a bite. You don't know what circumstance may cause a dog to react to a piece of food or toy or bone that he has never wanted to possess before so it is always best to keep your guests and dog safe from any possible situation.

How it starts

It may only start with a growl or snap to another dog or someone stepped on his tail that is why he bit. It doesn't matter, you know what you have and now you have to realize you may not know what will cause the next bite. When it starts, first keep your dog safe,

lock him away. Don't allow him to be around someone that may cause a bite. Second, start training immediately. In my experience, it never happens just one time. You have to be prepared for another situation and with each situation the bite will get worse.

You Can't Change Temperament

Although effective training can change your dog's behavior, it cannot change his temperament. A trainer can advise you on whether your dog's temperament is contributing to the issues you are experiencing. If that is the case, a trainer should be able to come up with a program to minimize your chances of being bitten by your dog. This in no way means that you have to wear kid gloves when interacting with your dog; rather, a trainer will teach you strategies to safely but effectively deal with situations such as when your dog has a bone or is on the couch.

Now What?

Your dog will have to be involved in a strict training program most of his life. That may be classes or private lessons or both. This problem never goes away completely and the moment you relax your training; the dog will begin to test you. Structured training sessions with a professional will help you see if the problem is getting worse, better or just plan keep it at bay.

When in doubt, keep others safe. I am a bit of a worrier, I take no chances. But it is better to keep everyone safe than to risk a bite. Not only for the humans, but your dog. Dogs are animals and unpredictable; you may think you have thought of all the potential problems that could cause a bite but sometimes our dogs surprise us.

With a dog with no bite inhibition there is no room for mistakes. A mistake can harm someone and cause your dog to be listed as a dangerous dog and on the hot seat for euthanasia. Don't put your dog in a position where he feels he needs to use his bite. Keep your dog safe from human error.

Conclusion

Developing a good training program is vital. The consequences of getting the training wrong are significant and sometimes irreparable. Therefore, training should not be attempted without contacting a professional trainer. A good trainer can help you develop a program that is appropriate for your dog and safe for you and your family.

About Beth Bradley

As one of the top professional trainers and competitors in the United States, Beth is committed to improving the lives of dogs and people through training. She teaches group classes and private lessons in basic and advanced obedience, competition dog training, puppy training, Schutzhund training, personal protection, Canine Good Citizenship, and therapy dog training.

Beth also trains and places service dogs for children with autism and custom trains "cross-trained" companion/protection dogs for families and individuals. She consults for shelters in the tri-state area and for New Jersey law enforcement on cases involving canine behavior and temperament.

Beth began studying animal behavior and dog training at age twelve. She has worked and studied under many renowned animal behaviorists and trainers. After graduating from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Criminal Justice, Beth worked as a New Jersey State Animal Control Officer. In 1989, she founded her own company and has made dog training and consulting her full-time career since 1995. Competing with her dogs, Beth has earned national and international titles, championships, and honors in both Schutzhund and AKC Obedience. In 2003 and 2009, she represented the United States in the FCI World Trials.

Beth is the author of *Real World Dog Training*, and has produced a number of training DVDs and videos. In addition, Beth trains and handles dogs for movies and television, with recent credits including *Board Walk Empire*, the *Batman* franchise, *Damages*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Good Wife*, and *The Blacklist*.

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