

## About the following article.....

Some of you, I am sure, are familiar with the Samsmiles Organization. If so you may have already benefited from some of the articles available on the Website.

This one, and others, were written by Jenny Turner, a dog trainer in Sydney, Australia.

She has kindly given her permission to reprint it in our Newsletter to benefit all Samoyed families.

More of her articles may be found at <http://www.samsmiles.org>

## Aggression -- by Jenny Turner

Aggression is a normal canine behaviour. Dogs use varying degrees of aggression to establish their rank in the pack, hunt and protect food, defend themselves from harm, defend their territory or due to pain. However, severe aggression is frightening and not necessary for a dog to display in a normal household/pet environment, and once you've got it you should take fast action or it will get worse.

The vast majority of seriously aggressive dogs are intact males, therefore desexing (neutering) is necessary and is your first course of action. If you don't want to neuter an aggressive male because you are hoping to breed from him, think about what kind of genes you will be passing on to his offspring!

### Growling:

Growling, lip-curling and shying away are the precursors to biting – they are the warning signs that the dog is uncomfortable, scared or angry. **These signs are good – you want your dog to give these warnings.** Dogs that are punished for showing these warning signs may skip the signs altogether and go straight to lunging and biting. If your dog gives warnings such as these, turn him away and remove him from the situation, then calm him and praise him for calming down.

### What to do:

Your first course of action is to get professional help. Contact your local obedience club, be honest and open about your problem and ask if they have the skills to help you.

If not, or if you try the club for a while and the problem is not improving, ask them to refer you to an animal behaviourist, someone who specializes in aggression.

**Socialization** – I put fear from mistreatment and abuse in this category, as the dog needs to be re-introduced to a normal environment so he can build trust. That is basically what socialization is – exposing the dog to a normal environment to build his confidence, trust and

appropriate responses. A poorly socialized dog will show aggression due to fear or dominance.

**Fear** – Never use the leash to drag your dog towards something it's scared of or you may leave it no choice but to defend itself – this reaction is called fear aggression. Instead, you go to the frightening object, touch it yourself and call your dog to you, let him come in his own time and reward for any progress he makes. This may take minutes, days, weeks or longer, but it is up to you to be patient and build his trust in you. If the object of his fear is something you can't "touch" such as a group obedience class, just stand at the outskirts of the class, as far as necessary for your dog to be comfortable and try to decrease the distance each week.

**Dominance** – In this instance dominance falls into two categories:

1. Dominance over other dogs -- If your dog is in the habit of approaching another dog with hackles up, or standing stiffly over the top of other dogs and growling, you need to reward and remove the dog **before** the behaviour occurs. Don't let your dog get close enough to stand over the other dog. Stop the approach just before the hackles go up, reward and then move on. If your dog is the type to bark furiously from a long distance, turn him around so he's not making eye contact with other dogs and praise him when he's quiet. Over a period of time you can decrease the distance between your dog and others. But please realize that it's probably unreasonable to expect your dog to be best friends with every other dog it comes into contact with – do you get on with every person you've ever met? The best we can hope for is a dog that will ignore the dogs he doesn't like.
2. Dominance over family members – Dogs who are allowed to run the household will often show aggression towards their own family members when they're asked to cease their activities.

This sort of thing includes a dog that growls when asked to get off the bed or lounge, or snaps if the owner comes near its food bowl. What is needed is a clear set of guidelines and control exercises to establish the humans as higher ranking members of the pack (click on the link for **Control Exercises** below for more tips). This is not to say that every dog that is allowed to sit on the lounge is going to have a dominance problem. But if you do identify this as a problem, don't risk being bitten by trying to drag a growling dog off the lounge. Change the rules so he's not allowed up in the first place. To prevent him from jumping on the lounge stack magazines or empty boxes on the cushions, then encourage your dog to sit on its own bed. If your dog does make its way onto the lounge, entice him down with a treat and reward when he sits on the floor. To tackle the food protection see Possession Aggression below.

**Teasing** – This is the most common reason why children are bitten by dogs, because they are left unattended and they unintentionally push the dog too far which causes him to bite from frustration. For this reason a dog should never be tied up and left unattended where someone could torment him, and children should always be supervised when playing with any dog, no matter how good you think the dog's temperament is.

**Possession aggression** – This is very common and understandable – no matter how many meals your dog sees come from a tin, his instinct tells him that he needs to protect the food he has in case there is a shortage in the future. To stop this, give your dog only half his meal in the first sitting, then as he's still eating, bring another handful of food to him. If he growls as you enter the room, place the food on the floor where you are and leave. As you increase his trust you will be able to decrease your distance and eventually he will know that you are not trying to steal food from him but are actually approaching his bowl to give him more.

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Jenny Turner's article on **Control Exercises**, mentioned in the above article, will be included in the next issue of **Samoyed Update**.

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**It is time to get the Samoyed Update back on schedule. I hope to have the July-August issue completed by the 10<sup>th</sup> of July. Please send any items for that issue to me no later than July 6<sup>th</sup>. Your help will be greatly appreciated.**  
**Marilyn J. Petzold, Editor**