

Holiday Dog Bite Prevention Tips

Visiting family and friends is part of the holiday season. Changes in routines, crowded rooms, unattended food and excited children can often lead to miscommunication between the resident dog and guests. Doggone Safe and Woofs, Purrs & Twitters of Clifton, New Jersey offer tips to keep kids and dogs safe over the holidays.

Family gatherings at a relative's house are the source of fond memories for many. The relative's dog may not enjoy these events as much as the rest of the family. Noise, confusion and changes in routine are stressful for dogs. Even a normally calm and docile pet may become agitated enough to bite under the extreme circumstances of a boisterous family celebration. Supervision may be lax if each adult thinks that another is watching the children. Children are the most likely victims of dog bites in this situation. Doggone Safe and **offer** the following tips:

- Put the dog in his crate with a bone or favorite chew toy, at least during the most hectic times – guests arriving and leaving as well as dinner preparation and serving.
- Assign one adult to be in charge of the dog, to watch for signs of stress and protect from unwanted attention from children.
- Signs of stress include:
 - The dog yawns or licks his chops.
 - The dog shows the white part of his eye in a half moon shape.
- If the dog shows any of these signs, then he is worried and wants to be left alone. Put the dog in his crate or in a room away from the guests with a favorite chew toy or bone.
- If the dog licks his chops, yawns or shows the half moon eye when a child approaches or is petting him, intervene immediately and ensure that the child cannot access the dog.
- Do not allow visiting children to hug the dog. Dogs don't like hugs and kisses. Even if the dog tolerates this under normal circumstances he may not tolerate this from strangers or in a high stress situation with lots of noise and people.
- Other signs that the dog does not welcome attention from children (or adult) guests include the following:
 - The dog turns his head away, walks away or tries to hide under furniture.
 - The dog freezes and becomes very still, with his mouth closed. He may be staring intensely at the person who is bothering him and may growl. This dog is a few seconds away from a bite.
 - The dog growls or raises the fur along his back.
- Assign one adult to supervise each baby or toddler with no other tasks expected.
- If you have multiple dogs, consider kenneling them, crating them or keeping them in another room during large gatherings.

- Supervise at all times.

Doggone Safe is a non-profit corporation registered in Canada, Ontario and New York State with offices in Canada the US and Australia. Doggone Safe's mandate includes dog bite prevention education and dog bite victim support. Educational seminar programs offered by Doggone Safe are Be a Tree™ (for school-aged children) and Be Doggone Smart at Work™ (for workers who come into contact with dogs on the job). For general information please visit Woofs, Purrs & Twitters website for more information.