



Is my dog overly aggressive?

The causes of aggression

Like people, dogs react to certain situations in different ways. Some situations are more stressful to particular dogs than others, so it's important to learn the warning signs of a dog that is anxious, or displaying aggression. There are many factors that affect a dog's tendency to be aggressive; its genetics, training, home environment and desexing status all play a role.

We understand...

...any dog has the capacity to show aggression. Learn the warning signs and how to respond to avoid a bite or attack.

Aggression: the Fast Facts

Ways to minimise your dog being overly aggressive:

- **Good Selection:** Choose the most suitable dog and breed from a reputable breeder who is a member of Dogs SA, a recognised shelter or association. Consider your family; finances; yard size; lifestyle and time for training and play.
- **Desexing:** Research tells us desexing your dog will reduce overly aggressive behaviours. Keep your dog in general good health by vaccinating; worm and flea prevention; regularly visiting your vet and providing a balanced diet with daily exercise also helps keep your dog happy.
- **Good Behaviour:** Teach your dog to behave well by socialising with others from puppy to adult. Provide training to ensure that you have sufficient control over your dog either on a lead or under voice command and actively supervise around children.
- **Good Care:** Provide your dog its own secure space. Make sure its council registration and microchip details are up-to-date to ensure a safe return.

We understand...
... training and socialising your dog from a young age is a great way to manage aggression in later life.



Reporting a dog harassment or bite

If you have an encounter with a dog that is aggressive, or attacks, it's important to report the incident to your local council.

Most councils have dedicated animal management teams, called Authorised Persons, whose job it is to manage dogs and cats in the local community. For your local council information and contact details visit www.lga.sa.gov.au.

Dealing with aggressive behaviours

If your dog feels threatened and is trying to protect itself, or its territory, it's more likely to react with aggressive behaviours.

As a dog owner, it is your responsibility to minimise the risk of your dog biting or harassing (including excessive barking or snarling) another person or animal, including members of your own family.

You are legally responsible for your dog's behaviour, even on private property, and can face fines or civil claims if your dog is allowed to attack or harass.

You should seek advice from a qualified animal behaviourist, as instances of aggressive behaviour are often fear-based. Studies have shown that using punishment or confrontation based methods will often lead to further fear and aggression.

Any dog can be aggressive

Above all, it is important to recognise that any dog can bite if it is frightened or threatened.

Sometimes these factors are beyond your control. You may have acquired an adult dog and don't know what experiences it had as a puppy. Fortunately it is possible to "teach an old dog new tricks", but it does take time, patience, and love.

Reputable dog shelters only re-home dogs which have undertaken a behavioural assessment. You can take comfort in the fact that they will test the temperament of the dog and staff will assist you to match your dog's personality to your family circumstances and lifestyle. They will be able to tell you the level of play and learning activity required and how that dog behaves with children and other dogs. These are all important things in managing the potential for aggression in your dog.

Aggression: a Good Owner tip

Some dogs may only be aggressive under certain circumstances, like when protecting their territory, food or family, and sometimes when confronted by a stranger.

You can reduce the risk by understanding the behaviour of your dog and how it demonstrates nervousness, anxiety or aggression.

To find the facts and other tips on how to be a good dog owner, visit dogandcatboard.com.au



An initiative of the **DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT BOARD** and your local council. Council information and contact details can be located at www.lga.sa.gov.au View the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* along with Information Sheets on selection, health, behaviour and care at www.dogandcatboard.com.au