

## **MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DOGS**

**MYTH: My dog is too old to learn new things.**

WRONG! For some owners, their dog's age is justification not to train them, because they've passed their 'use by date!' The truth is that older dogs can be taught new behaviours and are often very keen to learn fresh skills, especially when given clear and fair guidance and motivation.

For the benefit of you and your dog, the earlier you teach your dog behaviours that are important to you, the better.

As long as you're not having your mature dog do something that they're not physically capable of doing, and if you make learning stimulating and fun, you're on your way to way to blasting away another myth.

**MYTH: If a dog is afraid (particularly of men), it must have been abused / beaten.**

Not necessarily! Since behaviour is determined as a result of a combination of a dog's genes, experiences and learning, and the current environment, this is not always the case.

Dogs with shy, reserved temperaments, dogs that have had a lack of social interaction (particularly in their early development periods), and dogs suffering from boredom and stress are amongst those that can display similar behaviours to dogs that have been abused.

**MYTH: The dog bit me for NO reason!**

WRONG! Subtle body language signs that convey important meaning about a dog's current state of mind are often overlooked. If these signals were 'picked up' and the person had changed their behaviour towards the dog, the bite may not have happened.

As far as the dog is concerned, they are being provoked and, even though the provocation may be minimal, it could nonetheless give them enough 'reason' to react.

Ruling out neurological / medical reasons which may impact the dog's behaviour, dogs do not bite for no reason.

**MYTH! Labradors, Golden Retrievers (fill in your favourite breed) make great dogs for families with young children.**

Not necessarily! Regardless of the breed of the dog, making a blanket statement suggesting any individual in a specific breed is great (or not great) for families with young children is an uneducated, naïve and potentially harmful statement.

Individuals in any breed can potentially bite if the circumstances call for such a response.

Your number one guide to choosing a suitable pet for your family is the soundness of the dog's temperament, regardless of the breed.

**MYTH: The dog's tail is wagging, therefore it must be friendly and safe to pat.**

Not necessarily. Many people have been bitten by dogs with wagging tails. There are various tail wags, each with equally various meanings. When in doubt, read and interpret the front end of the dog to more accurately determine what the rear end may be communicating!

Dogs that are aroused can often be seen wagging their tail, but this may not be because they want your affection.

**MYTH: My dog gets enough exercise from being left in my big backyard.**

WRONG! Whether they have a smaller or larger backyard, dogs don't typically go off and 'exercise themselves', but instead look forward with baited breath to be taken away from their every day yard and investigate the world they live in.

Like us, dogs benefit greatly socially and physically from exposure to new and stimulating environments. It's great for their wellbeing and for the state of your backyard!

**MYTH: Dogs like hugs and kisses.**

Not necessarily. Whilst there are dogs that do accept hugging and kissing, others simply tolerate our human show of affection whilst others simply don't enjoy our 'human' greeting protocol at all.

Dogs can be desensitised to our hugs and kisses, but to assume that all canines like how we physically show our affection can put you and the dog in an awkward situation.

**MYTH: This dog will like me because all dogs like me and I know dogs.**

WRONG! All too often, this statement is followed by the person approaching a dog who visibly does not want to be approached. The dog often displays signs such as turning their head away, yawning, stiffened body posture, or whites of the eyes showing. All these indicate the dog doesn't want contact with this person and, unsurprisingly, can end in the dog acting defensively. If the person really 'knew dogs', they would be able to clearly read the dog's body language and leave them be.