

## **Dogs and children**

The early stages in a puppy's life are absolutely crucial to its development into adulthood. Becoming familiar with lots of people, other animals and different sounds, accompanied with a pleasant association ensures they don't begin to worry about them, as they grow older. Even when dogs brought up with a litter brother or sister you will see some dogs that dislike other dogs as they do not recognize a different breed as the same species as themselves. Equally dogs of the same litter can grow to dislike either men, women or children by the same sort of means.

Puppy socialisation classes are ideal to getting your dog familiar with a whole variety of people and different sights and sounds. However with a dog that has developed an aversion towards children, management of the situation is necessary. Dogs that were previously fine with children, can develop an aversion for even the slightest of events, that may or may not have been attributed to a child themselves. For example, upon hearing a sudden explosion, which startles the dog, if the dog happens to be looking at a child at that moment, it is understandable how some dogs can associate that event with a child and therefore make the connection, between a frightening experience and children. Therefore an aversion towards children can be formed. Equally children tend to be unpredictable, screech in high-pitched voices and run around moving suddenly. This can be worrying to some underconfident dogs and can cause them to adopt a self-preservation defensive strategy.

In trying to resolve a situation where a dog has an aversion towards children, management of the dog, their environment and the likelihood of their contact with children is necessary. Whenever in a public place the dog should be on a lead and with a history of any dog, snapping, snarling or growling, the dog should wear a muzzle for the safety of both the dog and people. It is difficult to socialise a dog with an established aversion towards children, because in order to do children need to be involved and with the safety of people paramount, these are situations, which can be untenable.

A consultation with a professional behaviour counsellor is probably the most sensible solution with a dog that has an established history, when the most appropriate advice may be given.