



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Canine Master on Pet Life Radio - Episode #16 Important Holiday Safety Tips for Children and Dogs

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Hi, welcome to Canine Master on Pet Life Radio. Today we're going to have a little sort of holiday edition. During the holidays, Thanksgiving and Christmas, many families come together and children start coming into the houses and maybe it's your dog and your grandma and grandpa and your grandchildren are coming. And your dog's just not used to having kids around. So because so many people are visiting during the holidays, I start to see a higher incidence of children being bitten during the holidays. The day after Thanksgiving, I think I'll probably have 17 phone calls of the dog biting someone. And many times that's at the house during Thanksgiving. A lot of chaos going on, and a child is unfortunately many times the victim. So today I want to talk about how kids can safely interact with dogs and things that you can teach your children or your grandchildren or your nieces and nephews to do when they're visiting the house.

So the first thing I tell kids to do is when you come over the house, don't start pestering and bothering my dog. Don't start chasing him around the house and bothering him. If the dog is trying to get away from the child, there's a reason. It means the dog is trying to stay away and this is an appropriate behavior. If they're nervous, the kids screaming and yelling. This also can make a dog very nervous and if the dog is not used to children, that dog is going to go into another room. If your children or the children start to follow that dog around the house, which I see all the time, that dog is trying to get away from them. You'd want to make sure that those kids don't bother the dog and leave the dog alone. If the dog wants to go into the back bedroom or hide under the bed, let him be. Don't force them out and don't force him to be around those children because this is where problems start.

The other thing I want to tell kids is don't put your face up to a dog's face. Don't bend over and kiss him on the head. Just because you're kissing grandma on the face, you don't do that to a dog you don't know or even to a dog you do know, but not so well. Dogs don't like that. That's actually a threatening posture. So when a child puts his face up to a dog and stares them in the eye or not even stares in the eye, bends over them and kisses them on the forehead, many times, unfortunately a bite will ensue because it's a threat. So you don't

want to have your kids do that. If the dog is in the back bedroom or on the floor and he has a toy or he has a bone, tell the kids to leave the dog alone. Don't go and grab the toy away from, or the bone away from the dog.

Many times I would tell you if it is a bone, put the dog away. Let him have the bone, put them in a crate, put them in a back bedroom and that room is off limits to the children so that the dog can feel safe. A lot of times I will take a dog that's a little bit nervous with kids. I'll fill up a KONG, that rubber KONG. I'll fill it up with peanut butter, freeze it, stick it in the bedroom and let the dog work on it for hours while we're having the party or having Thanksgiving. So avoid taking away dog's toys or bones. If the dog is sleeping, the dog is sleeping and the kids go up and want to lie down next to the dog. Generally this is a bad idea. If they want to cuddle the dog, if they want to lie on top of the dog, bad ideas, folks. So don't have your kids doing this either. Leave a sleeping dog lie. I think that's ... It goes something like that. But basically don't bother the dog. Don't climb on the dog. Don't ride the dog.

I can't tell you how many kids think that they want to ride the family dog. This is a horrendous idea., It can cause injuries. And many times I see dogs become reactive when they're being ridden. So riding a dog is never a good idea no matter how small the child is. I saw a guy a couple of years ago, came for Christmas and what he did was he went up to one of my Dobermans, took his baby and stuck him on his back. And my dog was trying to get away and this guy thought it was hysterical. I kind of got upset with this friend, but I just told him, I said, "That could've been a very dangerous situation."

All right, here's the next thing is, and this is very controversial, but I'm just going to tell you in my experience, dogs don't love being hugged. They tolerate it. I think monkeys and primates and humans are the only ones that like to hug frontal to frontal. Do dogs like to cuddle? Sure, they love to cuddle, but if your kid goes up and hugs the dog around the neck, that's not a very good situation. Many times dogs will become reactive in that situation and they are reactive, is actually aggression. So many times dogs become reactive and become aggressive when they're hugged by small children. So do not have your kids hug dogs. They can pet them, but if they're going to pet them, don't pet them on top of the head. Have them come from underneath. Give a little scratch, hello, hello, give a little scratch and that's it.

Also teach your kids how to pat the dog, not hard pats. Nice and soft and you could actually do it on them and if they do a hard pat, do it on top of your kid's head and say, "Do you like how that feels?" Usually they'll go, no, I don't like that. And I say, "Well, the dog doesn't like that either." So come underneath, a little scratch down by the neck. That's a great way for kids to introduce to a dog. If the dog is scared, leave him alone. If the dog doesn't want to be pet, leave him alone. And also screaming and yelling and running around the house and chaos, many dogs don't like that. As a matter of fact, again, I've seen many dogs start to become reactive to children that are screaming and yelling while they're playing tag in the house. If they're going to have to go do that, put them outside. Keep the dog inside because dogs will sometimes chase after a child that's screaming and yelling in a household to control the chaos. And this is something we don't want the kids to do.

So again, putting the dog away in another room may be the right thing to do. Also, avoid having the dog being elevated over the child or above the child. Again, elevation means status. So a lot of times when a kid is below them and a dog is above them. The kid puts his face into the dog sitting on the couch. This can potentially be a dangerous situation.

So it's really simple. If I have a dog and my dog's not used to kids, I'm going to make sure that my kid is really being supervised. And if you're having a lot of guests over and you think that it's just going to be too chaotic, you know what you do if you have your dog, go put him in the kettle, go put them in a doggy day care center overnight until the holiday's over. That's a better situation than to have your dog all stressed out in his environment and not being happy and potentially there being a bad situation.

All right, well, what can kids do with the dogs? Well, here's the thing. If you have a dog that you think is going to be pretty good around kids, but they're just not really, really sure, what you might do is take out a ball. Give them some treats and have them do some training and you could teach the kids how to do the training. You could also have the kid go and take them for a walk. And that's also good. Of course always supervised. So having your kid go outside with the dog and throw the ball or the Frisbee, taking the dog on a walk, having them do a little bit training with treats. Those are all very positive things that can make the relationship with that dog and that child become better and be put on the right path.

Okay, that's it for today and I really hope you found our show to be interesting and we'd love to know your comments and to have you join our conversations. You can visit us on caninemaster.com, and let me know what works for you and whether you're having any issues over Thanksgiving. Let us know. Send me your photos and videos so I can see what's going on with your dog and help you to solve your problems. Goodbye for now. See you next time on Canine Master Radio where I will continue to help you master the relationship with your dog.