



## Living Safely With Dogs: Tips for Dog Owners and Everyone

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### FOR DOG OWNERS

#### Be a responsible pet owner

- (1) **Selection:** Select dogs appropriate for your lifestyle and the environment in which you live.
- (2) **Identification:** License, microchip, and ensure your dog always wears a collar with an I.D. tag.
- (3) **Socialization:** From puppyhood, socialize your dog with people and other dogs through obedience training.
- (4) **Sterilization:** Spay or neuter your dog to improve its health and to minimize aggressive behaviors.
- (5) **Supervision:** Supervise and safely house your dog; never leave young children alone with a dog; and never tether a dog, which can lead to aggressive behaviors.

### FOR EVERYONE

#### Keep Yourself and Others Safe

- (1) **Spot aggression:** Know dog behavior warning signs.
- (2) **Report aggression:** Report aggressive dogs, tethered and loose dogs in public areas, and the cruel treatment of dogs.
- (3) **Expect enforcement:** Expect consistent and thorough enforcement of animal and public safety laws.
- (4) **Expect prosecution:** Be a willing witness and expect diligent prosecution and meaningful sentencing of people who break the law.
- (5) **Support Animal Control:** Support animal care and control agencies so they have the resources necessary to keep our community and animals safe.

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The Coalition for Living Safely with Dogs is a group of Colorado animal health, care, and control professionals that exists to promote understanding of the human and animal behaviors that impact community safety and to reframe the civic conversation about dangerous dogs.

- All Breed Rescue Network (ABRN)
- Animal Assistance Foundation (AAF)
- Colorado Association of Animal Control Officers (CAACO)
- Colorado Association of Certified Veterinary Technicians (CACVT)
- Colorado Federation of Animal Welfare Agencies (CFAWA)
- Colorado Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA)
- Denver Area Veterinary Medical Society (DAVMS)
- Metro Denver Shelter Alliance (MDSA)
- Summerlee Foundation

# Living Safely With Dogs: Expanded Tips

## FOR DOG OWNERS

### Be a responsible pet owner.

#### **(1) Select dogs appropriate for your lifestyle and the environment in which you live.**

- Are you active or sedentary?
- How much time and money can you invest in training your dog?
- Do you have limited space or lots of space? Where will your dog spend most of his or her time?
- Ask questions about the dog's background. Do not consider dogs with prior histories of aggression.
- Spend time with a dog before bringing it into your home.
- Animal shelters and veterinarians can conduct behavior assessments on dogs to help determine aggressive tendencies.
- Consider adopting an older animal.

#### **(2) License, microchip, and ensure your dog always wears a collar with an I.D. tag.**

- The law requires that you license and vaccinate your dog against the rabies virus. Each time your dog is vaccinated, the veterinarian will give you a tag to put on your dog's collar, indicating that your dog is up-to-date on its rabies shots.
- Even house dogs can get loose. Protect them by keeping a collar and tags on them at all times.
- If your dog is lost, a license can reunite you with your dog quickly. Microchipping is permanent identification that works even if the tag is lost.

#### **(3) From puppyhood, socialize your dog with people and other dogs, through obedience training.**

- "Socializing and supervising dogs with children reduces the risk of dogs behaving aggressively towards children and prevents types of aggression where the dog feels threatened or may be provoked." (Delise K. *Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics*, 2002:17)
- Take your dog to behavior classes to learn good behavior and how to behave around other dogs.
- Spend time with your dog on walks or at a "dog park." A tired dog is a well-behaved dog.

- Socializing your dog can help your animal adjust to new situations and respond appropriately. Having a well trained dog will help create a good canine citizen and strengthen the bond between you and your pet.

#### **(4) Spay or neuter your dog to improve its health and to minimize aggressive behaviors.**

- "Reproductive drive is directly linked to aggression." ("Do Dog Bans Create Dangerous Situations?" November 4, 2005, [www.9news.com](http://www.9news.com))
- "Unneutered dogs are 2.6 times more likely to bite than neutered dogs." (Gershman KA Sacks JJ Wright JC. "Which Dogs Bite?: A Case-Control Study of Risk Factors," *Pediatrics* 1994;93:913-917)
- Sterilized dogs live healthier lives. Spayed female dogs have a decreased risk for developing breast and ovarian cancer and uterine infections. Neutered male dogs have a decreased risk for developing enlarged prostate glands and testicular cancer.

#### **(5) Supervise and safely house your dog; never leave children alone with a dog; and never tether a dog, which can lead to aggressive behaviors.**

- "Chaining a dog is the single most dangerous condition in which to maintain a dog. It creates an unnatural and unhealthy environment and takes away the dog's option of flight." (Delise K. *Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics*, 2002:23)
- Tethered dogs can be territorial or bite because they cannot get away from a situation that feels threatening to them. Tethering in public areas is unlawful in most communities.
- Always supervise young children and animals when they are interacting together. Never leave children unattended with dogs or other pets.
- Animals need a safe and secure place to live. Give outdoor dogs shelter from weather and access to food and water.
- Tall fences will keep your dog at home where it belongs. Never allow your dog to run at large.

# Living Safely With Dogs: Expanded Tips

## FOR EVERYONE

### Keep Yourself and Others Safe

#### **(1) Spot aggression. Know the warning signs.**

- “Dogs communicate aggression through vocalization (growling, barking) OR body language (stiffened posture, raised hackles, bared teeth, snapping, or staring).” (Delise K. *Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics*, 2002:17)
- Do not approach an unfamiliar dog, especially if the dog is tied up or is resting.
- Do not run from a dog; remain motionless and let the pet sniff you.
- Ask the owner for permission to pet or play with a dog.
- Never bother a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- Sometimes mistaken as play, dominant behavior can escalate quickly to a bite. Watch for alert barking, the dog stops, his or her body stiffens, and he or she stares. A dog may rub up against you with force, body check you, or jump up on your back. Sometimes a dog excessively mouths or pulls on clothing and doesn't calm down.

#### **(2) Report aggressive dogs, tethered and loose dogs in public areas, and the cruel treatment of dogs.**

- Report dangerous behavior even if the dog is enclosed behind a fence.
- Report dogs that chase kids or passers-by.
- Report dogs that are not properly confined to their property.
- A dog running at large is at risk for their own safety and the safety of others.
- Cruelty and neglect include lack of proper care and shelter, physical abuse, and dog fighting.

#### **(3) Expect consistent and thorough enforcement of animal and public safety laws.**

- Every community needs officials to respond promptly to animal issues from dogs running at large to a bite. Enforcement can consist of education, writing warnings and tickets, and impoundment of animals.
- Support animal care and control and code enforcement officers
- Ensure that your community has enforceable, strong dog laws.

#### **(4) Be a willing witness and expect diligent prosecution and meaningful sentencing of people who break the law.**

- Contact prosecutors and judges with your expectations in dangerous dog cases.
- Enforcement must be backed up by a judicial system that takes animal laws seriously. Does the judge impose penalties on violators or dismiss tickets? Is there an education system in place to have violators and pets evaluated?

#### **(5) Support animal care and control agencies so they have the resources necessary to keep our community and animals safe.**

- Vote to allocate the financial resources needed to run a quality animal care and control agency.

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