



# Safety Protocols

## for dogs with bite risk

Safety is the most critical part of any behaviour modification programme.

If the safe management protocols fail just once, a serious bite incident may occur. Accidents will happen.

### General Principle

The principles involved in setting up safe management protocols are the same as for other safety protocols, in that a failure of the protocol should require at least TWO things to fail. In the case of dogs, best practices therefore require that there be at least TWO safe barriers between the dog and the rest of the world. These "barriers" include things like muzzle, crate or pen, leash, locked doors or gates, or simply distance.



### 1. Children

Any dog that may be at all uncomfortable around strangers and/or children, or that resource guards (food, toys, owner) against children and/or dogs, ***must be kept physically separated from children at all times***. Even more than adults, children do not follow instructions. From the dog's point of view, children move erratically and unpredictably, which the dog may find intimidating. Children are also liable to want to not only pet the dog, but to pick him up, hug him or kiss him, and to suddenly decide to take something away from him. Such actions are leading causes of serious dog bites and can be catastrophic for both the child and the dog.

### 2. Fenced Yard

If the dog liable to bite people that walk into the yard, and the dog is given access to a back-yard, the yard should be secured with a fence high enough that the dog cannot jump or climb over it. For large breeds, the height should be six feet, with additional wire with "coyote rollers" on top to prevent climbing or jumping; for smaller or less agile dogs, the height can be reduced accordingly. If the dog is left unsupervised and unmuzzled in the yard, the fence should also be secured under ground against digging. If the fenced yard has a gate to the front that is accessible to the general public, the gate must be secured with double gates ("air-lock"), one of which must be pad-locked at all times, to prevent the dog from being able to escape when somebody enters the yard from the road.

### 3. Doors

If the dog is liable to bite people or dogs in the street, and he is kept unmuzzled in the house and there is access from any door of the house

directly to the road, additional doors and gates should be installed in order to create an 'air-lock' system, so that there are always two doors or gates between the dog and the outside world, in case that somebody unexpectedly opens a door and the dog runs out.

#### **4. Safe Room**

If the dog is liable to bite visitors, a lockable room should be available where the dog can be kept safely when needed, for example when visitors with children arrive, or when multiple visitors arrive and there is risk that the air-lock system of doors may be compromised. The room should lock with a key and the key should be kept by the owners, so that children or other visitors cannot accidentally (or wilfully) enter the dog's room against instructions.

#### **5. Muzzle**

Whenever a dog that is considered a serious bite risk (e.g. barks and lunges at people or dogs on sight) is taken out in public, or otherwise exposed to strangers, children, or dogs, he should wear a secure basket muzzle. We recommend the Baskerville Ultra muzzle. The dog should learn to enjoy wearing the muzzle through an appropriate training programme. **IMPORTANT:** The muzzle does not mean that we can now put the dog into situations that we would not put him into if he was not wearing a muzzle – that will make his fear/aggression worse! Instead, the muzzle is additional insurance. Just like the seat belt in our cars. We use it for additional protection, not so that we can race down the road without due caution.

#### **6. Walking a dog in a muzzle**

A dog can inflict serious trauma (physical and emotional) even while wearing a muzzle. It is therefore preferable that a dog that is liable to lunge at children, strangers or dogs be secured with two leashes, in case one leash attachment breaks or is dropped by accident. The "working" leash should be attached to a safe walking harness and the "back-up" leash should attach to a martingale collar or head halter. The working leash should be hand-held, and the back-up leash could either be held in the other hand or be a waist-leash. If both leashes are held in the same hand, both leashes could be dropped at the same time.

#### **7. In Case the Worst Happens**

Check your homeowner's insurance for cover for dog bites. In order not to invalidate your policy in case your dog bites somebody from outside your household, you should inform your insurance company if you have a dog that has a bite history, or that may bite.

*References:*

<https://www.crd.bc.ca/service/animals-pets/animal-complaint/dangerous-dogs>

<https://www.ahainsurance.ca/home-insurance/homeowners-insurance-and-dogs/>

<https://lambertlaw.com/dog-bite/>

