

# canine questions

By Sharon Harvey

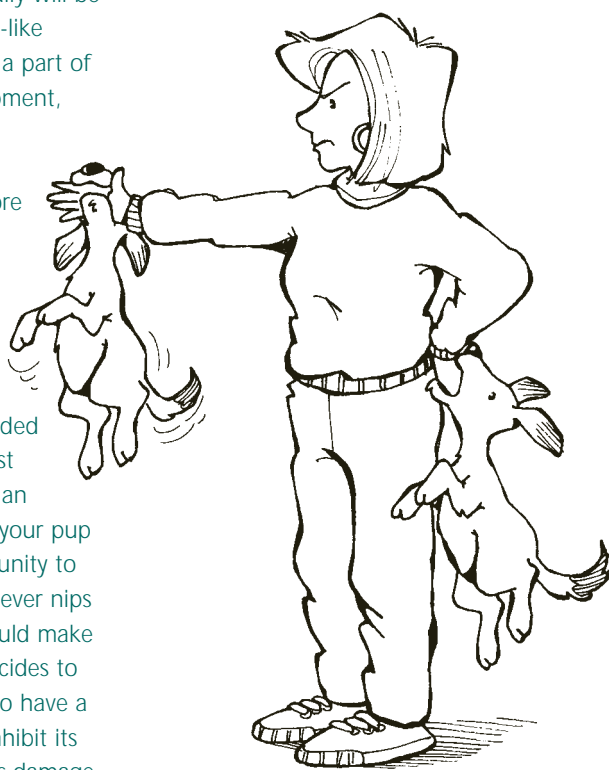
**Q** I'm starting to think that I adopted a piranha rather than a lab mix puppy. How can I keep my pup from using me as a human teething ring? Hurry, I'm running out of Band-Aids—AND FINGERS!!!

**A** There's good news and bad news. The good news is, you won't be a human chew toy for long. The bad news is, almost all puppies go through a period of nippy behavior. Anyone who signs on to raise a pup eventually will be on the receiving end of wee, needle-like teeth. Play-biting and mouthing are a part of the pup's normal behavioral development, and like human babies, they also go through a teething stage that could cause mouthiness to get worse before it gets better.

When still in the litter, puppies nip each other and their mother in play. They learn to inhibit their bite by trial and error—if they bite too hard, they're corrected by the wounded recipient. Once home, your pup must also learn to inhibit her bite on human flesh. It's actually a good thing that your pup is nipping as it gives you the opportunity to teach her that it hurts. A pup that never nips and never learns what's too hard could make a very painful mistake if ever she decides to bite for real. The pup that's taught to have a soft mouth is much more likely to inhibit its bite, therefore less likely to do serious damage to a human or other animal, whether in play or for real, in the future. Once your pup has learned to be gentle with her mouth and respond to a "no bite" command, it's time to teach her that she shouldn't put her mouth on you at all.

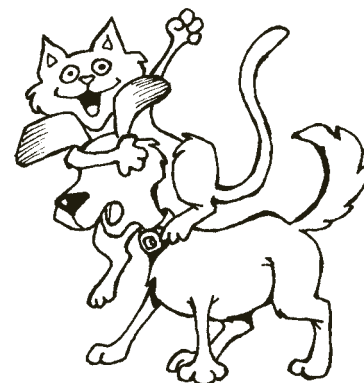
So what should you do when your puppy starts to bite? Start with a strategy that comes natural to most, scream, "OUCH!" Use a high-pitched, startling tone that mimics her wounded Mom's yip of pain. This quick, impressive cry should be followed by a calm "no bite" reminder as you either substitute a toy that has no nerve endings or walk away from the pup, leaving it on a timeout. Your

pup will need to learn that you will NEVER EVER play with her if she's using her mouth too roughly. NEVER tease your pup or encourage her to play with her mouth...



what's cute now may not be so cute when she weighs 85 pounds and has 197 teeth! If she starts to get mouthy, calmly command "no bite" and redirect her jaws to something legal and non-living. If she refuses to comply—timeout! If you're consistent with your expectations and reactions, your pup will quickly learn that being gentle with her mouth is the quickest path to having a great time with her people.

As for the Band-Aid supply, just stock up—you'll be learning by trial and error as well!!!



**If you're having a problem with your cat or dog,** call the Rescue Village HelpLine at 440.338.4819, ext. 13 or send an e-mail to [askthetrainer@geaugahumane.org](mailto:askthetrainer@geaugahumane.org). We'll help you solve your problem or refer you to someone who can. The most frequently asked questions will find their way into the Rescue Village Reporter's Ask the Trainer column or onto Q104's Ask the Trainer radio segment that can be heard on Sunday's Wilde & Fee Morning Show during the 8 o'clock hour.

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To shelter and find homes for sick, injured, abused, and abandoned domestic animals that have no other alternatives

To foster compassion for all living things through education

To reduce pet overpopulation through spay/neuter programs

To prevent cruelty by advocating and enforcing animal protection laws