



Dr. Nick Dodman

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Family dog bites are preventable

Research Objectives

The Center for Canine Behavior Studies (CCBS) is a Connecticut-USA not-for-profit 501 c3 company that undertakes canine behavior research to better understand human–canine interactions that sustain or break bonds. Particular focus has addressed canine aggression, its causes and treatments, and human-directed education that will reduce the risk of family dog bites – particularly to children.

Detail

Funding

- The American Foundation
- CCBS membership and CCBS board members

Bio

- Nicholas H Dodman, veterinary behaviorist, co-founder, CEO and president
- Chris P Janelli, co-founder and board chairman
- Robin Grimm, PhD, project director
- Victoria Stilwell, expert dog trainer and TV star
- Vivian Zottola MS, human–animal relationship specialist
- Nahid Shirzadkhan MS, creative and artwork contributor
- Allie Tellier, executive director
- Ian Dinwoodie MS, informatics expert and statistician
- Child Development experts – Tufts University
- FableVision – children’s educational media production

References

- Center for Canine Behavior Studies, centerforcaninebehaviorstudies.org.
- Pet Statistics, aspca.org.
- Animal bites, who.int.
- American Pet Products Association, americanpetproducts.org.
- Plana, NM, et al, (2022) Pediatric Dog Bite Injuries: A 5-Year Nationwide Study and Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *J Craniofac Surg*, 33(5), 1436–1440. doi.org/10.1097%2FSCS.00000000000008670
- Dodman, N, (2022) Improving dog welfare: Helping owners decode their dogs’ behavior. *Research Outreach*, 131. doi.org/10.32907/RO-131-3039191641



Family dog bites are preventable

Family dogs are our best friends but can bite when feeling imposed upon, threatened, or afraid. By learning and respecting what dogs do and do not like and how they communicate their concerns, we can avoid triggering a reactionary bite. Led by world-renowned veterinarian Dr. Nicholas H. Dodman, Professor Emeritus, Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, USA, Be BiteSmart aims to support families in learning to recognise a dog's behaviour and signals that often precede a reactionary bite. Learning this will contribute to a safe and loving environment.

Dogs are our best friends. Dogs are marvellously innocent, vivacious, funny, and affectionate creatures. We domesticated dogs thousands of years ago to protect, entertain, and work for us. They continue to do all of those things, but now in an accepted capacity as a 'family member'.

DOGS ARE NOT HUMANS

We have a lot in common with dogs; they seem so human at times and we often treat them that way, but they are nonetheless still dogs who sense the world and communicate in different ways to us. As such, behaviors that our children

become agitated, potentially causing a serious injury.

BEING FOREWARNED IS BEING FOREARMED

Family dogs are loyal, loving, social animals, but when they bite – particularly young children who may innocently provoke them – to protect themselves, they often do not fare well either. Family dogs that bite are likely to be relinquished to shelters, where they are at great risk of being euthanized. Some are even destroyed at the scene if they are deemed unsafe. There are far too many avoidable dog deaths and bite injuries to children over often provoked but preventable interactions.

Studies suggest that tens of millions of people are bitten by dogs globally each year, and although most dog bites are non-fatal, some do kill, and non-fatal injuries can leave both physical and mental scars. A bite can cause lifelong fear and anxiety. Many bites go unreported so there is no accurate global estimate. But according to the World Health Organization, in the United States 'approximately 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs every year. Of these, nearly 885,000 seek medical care; 3–18% develop infections; 30,000 require reconstructive surgical procedures and between 10 and 20 fatalities occur.'

Biting incidents can be traumatizing, life-altering, even life-ending events for dogs and their families. Dogs usually give all sorts of warning signs prior to a bite – both through sound and body language. Education and awareness in both adults and children can avoid these dog-related disasters. So, let's reduce the risk of these tragedies happening. Being forewarned is being forearmed!

Be BiteSmart (BBS) is a human-canine education initiative to encourage and help families learn how a dog communicates through body language and sound, how it expresses their likes and dislikes, and tolerances for family interactions, and when to stop or back off from the dog to prevent potential bites. To achieve this objective, a multimedia suite of age-appropriate educational materials will be created by a team of specialists, led by Dr. Nicholas Dodman. Recognized worldwide as a leading dog veterinary behaviourist, Dr. Dodman has almost 50 years of experience. His final mission is to use his accumulated knowledge and experience to reduce the number of annual dog bites to adolescents – particularly infants and toddlers – that are often severe, traumatic and life altering, both physically and psychologically.

Dr. Dodman knows people can learn how to interact appropriately and safely with their dogs when they understand how a dog thinks, communicates and is likely to respond to human actions. For decades, the pediatric surgical-medical community has called for more and better education for adults and children specifically to reduce the risk and incidence of family dog bites.

THE BiteSmart SOLUTION

Dr. Dodman and his Be BiteSmart team are offering the solution. They are helping



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Be BiteSmart's mission is to keep both our children and dogs safe.

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people to understand their dogs by creating educational children's animated media that show children (and yes, parents too) how dogs communicate through sound and body language. Featuring a child named Alex with their dog named Charlie, they neatly demonstrate everyday activities like how to play or say 'hello', when not to interact with a dog (during eating or sleeping), and explain what the dog is saying through different body actions and expressions. The initial series is intended for young children (toddlers to pre-schoolers) to watch with their parents. Alex and Charlie then become part of a growing multimedia suite with age-appropriate augmented reality and gaming for children of all ages.

ENSURING DOGS HAVE A HOME FOR LIFE

Education and respect for our dogs' likes, dislikes, and behavioral responses are vital across all age groups. All dog parents and children need to be equipped with age-appropriate knowledge to pick up on the warning signs that dogs give when they are getting frightened or offended. By helping our children and our dogs to understand each other better, the risk of injury can be substantially reduced, allowing family dogs to live happily and safely with us all.

KEEPING CHILDREN AND DOGS SAFE

Be BiteSmart provides a vital resource for everyone, educating children and adults alike in how to correctly interact with their dogs to prevent bites. Be BiteSmart will be free, easily accessible, and a simple and engaging way to learn all that we

need to know about dog communication. By reducing the risks of dog bites, we are helping to prevent children from potential lifelong trauma, disfigurements, and even fatalities. As well as keeping children safe, Be BiteSmart will help reduce the number of dogs being wrenched from their families and homes to be sent to shelters and euthanized. Be BiteSmart's mission is to keep both our children and dogs safe.

SUPPORT THIS INITIATIVE

The Be BiteSmart initiative must raise sponsorship funding to produce the first FableVision Alex and Charlie animation video for toddlers and pre-schoolers; this is episode 1 of a total of 12 to teach these children the basic do's and don'ts in order to reduce their risk of being bitten.

To proceed, \$100,000 must be raised, which can come from numerous sponsors, all of whom will be given credit for their support at the end of the video.

The pilot video will be used to seek additional corporate support for the entire educational series that will be available for free to anyone anywhere with internet access.

Child safety organizations and injury prevention departments in Children's Hospitals have already agreed to make the information available. This is an opportunity to do good for both children and dogs, and gain recognition for your support.

If you wish to discuss the project further, please get in touch:
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Alex

Charlie





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