

Dog owners have responsibilities

OF late there have been reports of dog attacks within our community and by and large the dogs have been blamed for the incidents.

Among companion animals, dogs are unmatched in their devotion, loyalty and friendship. Anyone who has owned and loved a dog will attest to this.

The close relationship between dog and man goes back to thousands of years and dogs have served man in many areas including protection of livestock and property, hunting, herding, tracking, rescue work, crowd control, narcotics detection and helping the blind and disabled.

The obedient nature and astute behaviour of dogs naturally make them the most ideal companion for man.

It is unfortunate that man, at times, does not act prudently and fails in his duty to provide for this relationship to foster.

It is also unfortunate that in untoward incidents, the dogs are blamed. Maybe it is because they cannot speak up to defend themselves.

We need to be aware that owning a dog is not just a privilege – it's a responsibility.

Apart from providing good food, a loving home, socialisation and training, dog owners have a social responsibility to their community.

They are responsible for their dogs' behaviour and activities in their neighbourhood.

When dog owners shirk in their responsibilities there will be changes in their dogs' behaviour and temperament.

Common failures are:

- > Lack of training and socialisation at early age;
- > Making their dog a "backyard" dog. Tying them with a chain to live their entire life outside with little or no human contact and confinement;
- > Letting their dogs run loose in their neighbourhood;
- > Neglect and physical abuse;
- > Abandonment of unwanted puppies and adult dogs;
- > Indiscriminate breeding of unsound dogs; and
- > Aggression training.

The solution to the problems rests squarely on the dog owners' shoulders.

Errant dog owners need to recognise and assume their social responsibility of dog ownership and be accountable for their dogs' behaviour and activities. The rights of residents in their community must be respected.

Very often it is negligence that compromises the safety and welfare of the people around them.

Keeping their dogs within their compound

or on a leash when walking outside will significantly reduce the possibility of unwarranted incidents.

If they do not plan to have puppies, the dogs should be neutered or spayed as accidental matings can happen.

Early training and socialisation will help the dog to be well-adjusted in the company of people and be an integral part of the family.

They will also be less fearful and less likely to react negatively to stressful and unusual situations.

The Malaysian Kennel Association conducts regular classes on socialisation and obedience training and we invite dog owners to join us in helping our dogs to be trained and schooled so that they can be what they should be – obedient and loyal companions that are confident and comfortable in the presence of people.

Those interested in obedience training can contact our office Tel: 03-7729 2027 for more details. Lastly, on the subject of dog attacks, the following website: www.wikihow.com/Handle-a-Dog-Attack has many tips on how to respond in the event of a dog attack. Worthwhile reading.

LARRY YUEN,
President,
Malaysian Kennel Association.