

Understanding your dog's behaviour

I REFER to the recent letters on dog attacks.

Animal instincts in a dog can mean the instinct to be loyal to its owner, the instinct to protect its owner, the instinct to follow and react to its prey drives, defence drives, etc.

It is because the majority of dog owners do not understand the psychology of a dog that they simply dump all these drives together and classify it as instincts.

I have seen on YouTube a dog lying beside its owner in a restaurant (not in Malaysia) and there were people walking around. Then a little girl came running past the dog and the dog attacked her.

Yes, the dog was acting on instinct but in this case, it was acting on its instinctive prey drive.

The little girl here was riding a bicycle and the dog attacked her when she fell from her bicycle.

When she was falling off her bicycle, maybe her parents or somebody was shouting for her to be careful and this may have triggered the dog's "instinctive" prey drive and the dog followed its instinct and went for her.

What steps can the owner take to correct the dog's behaviour?

Again the word "behaviour" is too general.

If "behaviour" means that the dog should feel comfortable with people around and not attack them, then the owner must socialise his dog as

early as possible when the dog is still a puppy.

He should expose the puppy to different environments i.e. places where there are people and children, bicycles and cars and other animals.

In the case of the tourist who was killed by two dogs and the boy attacked by three dogs while playing football, we do not really know what happened to trigger the attacks.

Man, the animal, may kill other animals for the thrill and the adrenaline rush but other animals only kill to satisfy their hunger.

If dogs were to attack people for the fun of it, imagine how many reports of dog attacks we would be receiving in view of the thousands of stray dogs around.

There is no denying that there are vicious dogs around. They become vicious because of the bad experiences they went through.

There was a case of pit bulls belonging to a celebrity who had them trained for dog fights but out of the more than a dozen rescued by Animal Police, only one had to be put down. The rest were found suitable for adoption after they were rehabilitated.

As I said earlier, not all dog owners understand dog behaviour. It is the irresponsible dog owners who give dogs its bad reputation.

**IN DEFENCE OF 'DUMB' ANIMALS,
Penang.**