Handling dogs

Why dogs bite

Dogs may bite, so it is important to assess their temperament before attempting to handle them to determine the need for the type of approach or restraint required.

Dogs are likely to bite for one of four reasons:

- fear
- territorial defence
- dominant aggression
- as a response to pain.

Fear

A timid dog may become frightened because it is removed from its familiar surroundings. These dogs will sit in the back of the cage, crouched and cowering. When approached, they try to shrink away further, trembling, tail tucked under them, ears flattened and sometimes even wet themselves.

The best approach with these animals is to try to allocate some time to winning their confidence, so sit at the front of the cage, talk quietly, and try to encourage them to come to you.
Territorial defence

Some dogs will behave aggressively on their own premises, or even with their own owners, because they are protecting their 'territory'. These animals are best handled away from their familiar surroundings, including their owners.

In a hospital or kennel situation some of these dogs will regard their cage as part of their territory.

Dominant aggression

Some dogs will bite to reinforce their dominance over you. These are the confident, 'pack leader' type of dogs, who control their owners and expect to control you also. These dogs should be handled firmly and with caution. Their owners may be required to be present.

Response to pain

Any dog may bite you if you do something painful to it. Use adequate restraint before performing painful procedures.
Handling dogs: Do’s and don’ts

The way you approach and behave near a dog will affect how it behaves with you. Here’s a suggested list of how to handle dogs.

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<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
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<td>• Do approach quietly, side on and crouch down to let the dog walk up to you.</td>
<td>• Don't walk quickly, loudly or straight at the dog looking it in the eye.</td>
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<td>• Do speak to the owner while patting the dog; let the dog see the owner is relaxed with you.</td>
<td>• Don't just grab hold of the dog and walk away.</td>
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<td>• Do ask the owner to hand the dog to you, rather than take it away from them.</td>
<td>• Don’t stay face on or over the dog.</td>
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<td>• Do spend extra time helping the dog relax before you put it into a cage so that it is not still terrified when you try to take it out.</td>
<td>• Don’t lean your face into the dog’s face.</td>
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<td>• Do leave the dog alone in the cage long enough to settle in before you take it back out, as this will make it keener to see you again.</td>
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