

# Aggression or fear?



Think you have an aggressive dog? Canine behaviourist and trainer David Brice begs to differ

**I** OFTEN hear it said, by people that contact me for help, that they have been told their dog is aggressive. It usually turns out the dog is displaying aggressive

behaviour but only in one context. For example, 'he snapped at a strange man when he reached down to pat him'!

My immediate response is that your dog isn't necessarily aggressive; the definition of 'aggressive dog' implies that he is constantly biting, for no discernible reason, because his temperament leans towards attack rather than retreat or acceptance.

If a dog is showing 'aggressive' behaviour when this one situation occurs, the rest of the time 'he is lovely', then we must look for reason beyond aggression for the answer.

Labelling behaviour like this is misleading, and often leads to the unnecessary use of

aversive methods (shouting, yanking leads, spray collars etc) to try to prevent it.

A realistic appraisal of what is actually happening is far more useful than a label that actually doesn't tell us anything.

In the example used in the first paragraph, the reason for the behaviour, as in most cases of perceived aggression, was fear; this particular dog was a rescue case, with no known history and the new owner certainly wasn't to blame for his reaction towards men.

Happily the dog in question now greets men with a swishing tail and 'soft eyes'. He has learnt that men appearing trigger good things to happen. It took several months of hard work but he is now visibly happy when a man appears. He no longer snaps but licks and nudges hands. His new reactions are completely different and he is much less anxious.

His owners will always need to protect him from potentially 'scary' situations. They are more than happy to do this, whilst still taking their 'non-aggressive dog' to training classes and the park to meet people daily.



So, if you have a dog that is acting in an aggressive manner, please remember that he or she is most likely not aggressive but scared and the old adage that it is always the owners fault isn't necessarily true!

• **David Brice, 07788 857 092**  
**info@db-dogbehaviour.co.uk**  
**www.db-dogbehaviour.co.uk**

*Ruff And Tumble*  
 Brancaster

THE ULTIMATE DOG DRYING COAT

Double thickness soft cotton towelling.  
 Sofa throws. Dog bed covers.  
 Five practical colours. Sizes to fit all.  
 Prices from £25



Order by Phone or online:  
 03332 079960  
[www.ruffandtumbledogcoats.com](http://www.ruffandtumbledogcoats.com)

## NORTH NORFOLK LIVING

We are looking to continue expanding our advertisement sales team



We are looking for an individual who:

- Has previous advertisement sales experience
- Is hungry to succeed, with a positive outlook
- Must be based in North Norfolk

We offer:

- A part-time opportunity (five issues per year) working from home
- Flexible hours
- A strong brand and a fun team to work with

If you are interested in pursuing this opportunity email

Lin Murray at [lin@northnorfolkliving.co.uk](mailto:lin@northnorfolkliving.co.uk) telling us a bit more about yourself, or call 07881 657 944 to find out more.