

## **Kids and Dogs**

Few things compare to the unique relationship between kids and pets but let's be honest... in the hectic world we live in, bringing in a small dog to the mix adds additional time and responsibility to already frenetic schedules. Much of this extra effort must come from adults in the household – with a little advance planning and setting down a few new and important rules, the benefits you all will reap can surpass any doubts you may have had when making the decision to get a pet.

### **Get off on the right paw!**

- ❖ Teach the dog to take treats gently and only when told to "take it" on cue. Food in the hands of children is not up for grabs.
- ❖ Teach the dog to not place his teeth on children or their clothing. Have appropriate toys and objects available to do a fast exchange and divert their attention when this occurs.
- ❖ Teach the dog to sit politely for treats and petting. No jumping!
- ❖ Teach the dog to listen to commands, even when children give them (and children must learn to use the same commands as adults do – consistency is everything!).

### **Kids need new rules too!**

- ❖ Dogs must be left alone when they are eating, sleeping, resting or chewing a bone. Constant interruptions may irritate the pet, forcing him to reach a point where he tells children (in dog language) to "bug off!" When consistently repeated, for the dog this will become a habit when he sees children approaching – all children, not just your own!
- ❖ Do NOT remove objects from a dog's mouth. If a child wants something that is in a pet's mouth, he or she should ask an adult to remove it.
- ❖ Noisy games and running should be outdoor activities or if nothing less, take place away from the dog. Running children often excite a dog and make it irresistible for him to give chase, especially if he hasn't had adequate exercise.
- ❖ Do NOT allow a child to chase after a dog – he may become fearful, suddenly turn or snap, and you've set the dog up for failure by allowing chasing.
- ❖ Do NOT use the pet as a pillow, step stool, doll or toy. Roughhousing, wrestling and grabbing can cause problems that once begun, cannot be reversed.
- ❖ Do NOT allow children to pick up and/or carry puppies or dogs unless they have been given permission by an adult. Accidentally dropped or if the child stumbles and falls can cause injury to both your child and the dog.
- ❖ Children should ALWAYS be under supervision whenever around a dog or puppy – it only takes a second for a dog to bite and puncture human skin. ALL dogs can bite, regardless of the breed or past history. It is too easy for a toddler to fall on, startle a sleeping animal or exhibit 'prey behavior' to a dog as they crawl along the ground, shriek loudly, etc.

**One final reminder:** Always be prepared for those once-in-a-lifetime photo opportunities! Some of the sweetest childhood memories are those made between the interaction of a child and their dog as they grew up!