

Hot and bothered

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.

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Ask about your needs before deciding to own a dog

THE recent incidents of dog attacks have underscored the need to promote greater awareness of the social responsibilities of dog ownership within the community.

The key to the problem is prevention. Current dog owners should ensure that their dogs are under control at all times and do not pose any problem to their community.

Prevention also means that potential dog owners take time to evaluate their needs and the suitability of the breed they are contemplating to own. Specifically ask yourself:

- > Why do I want a dog?
- > Do I understand the characteristics of this breed?
- > Can it fit into my lifestyle?
- > Do I have the space and time to take care of it, which includes early socialisation and training?

> What exercise needs do this breed require?

> What is its grooming requirements and can I provide that?

> Can I commit to taking good care of it over the next 10 years or so?

These considerations will help you to select the right breed for your situation.

Once you have decided on a breed look for a reputable breeder who will have well-bred stock for you to select.

The breeder may also assess your suitability as an owner of his stock.

After you have selected a sound, healthy puppy, put it on an early socialisation programme to help the puppy settle in the new environment and bond with the family members.

As the puppy grows, it is impor-

tant to put it through some basic obedience training to reinforce the desired behaviour you expect from your dog.

The Malaysian Kennel Association offers obedience training classes which are held weekly under qualified training instructors.

All these call for commitment and if these steps are followed diligently you will have a dog that will live up to its reputation as man's best friend.

Conversely, if you cannot commit to these responsibilities please don't own a dog. It will not be fair to the animal or to your community. There are other pets that may suit you better.

LARRY YUEN,
President,
The Malaysian Kennel Association.

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A wake-up call

LEGAL ACTION: Owners are accountable for their dogs' actions

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THE recent dog attacks must serve as a wake-up call for dog owners to properly manage their canines, said Malaysian Kennel Association president Larry Yuen.

"The latest incident involving a miniature bull terrier killing an elderly man in Subang Jaya last week was largely due to negligence and would not have occurred if owners exercised proper control of their pets."

Yuen said owners, not the dogs, were solely accountable for their pets' behaviour and that awareness and education were key to avoiding future incidents.

"The key to solving the problem is prevention. Owners should take time to evaluate their needs and the type of dog that they are planning to adopt or buy."

On Tuesday morning, Yip Sun Wah, 74, was attacked and killed by a neighbour's dog while he was out

on his regular jog.

"Ask yourself this question: Can I provide the right environment, the proper amount of time and the appropriate stimulation to fulfil those inborn breed-related needs?"

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Selangor) chairman Christine Chin agreed with Yuen, saying owners must be responsible and be accountable for any transgression or damage caused by their dogs.

"They (owners) must train their animals adequately with love and care. Similarly, they must make sure that their maids are able to handle these dogs. The owners' houses should have double fencing, and all gates should be closed to prevent their dogs from escaping."

She also urged the government to consider amending existing laws or implement new laws to avoid a recurrence of the incident.

"In the United Kingdom, for example, the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 prohibits the possession of dangerous breeds, except under strict controlled conditions. Six breeds, including the American bulldog, are banned in the United Kingdom. But we have no such law in Malaysia.

Datuk Jaharberdeen Mohamed Yunos, a lawyer and a dog owner, said a law similar to the Dangerous Dogs Act should be implemented to keep dog owners in check.

"Owners of restricted breeds must take extra care in handling their canines. Such dogs should be leashed and

muzzled when taken out for walks as they can sense other people's fear. We wouldn't want them to injure innocent passers-by.

"Legal action should be taken against illegal dog owners and illegal dog breeders. The government should be criminalising the tort aspect of the law."

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Christine Chin
SPCA chairman**

Promotion HMs in Sa

KOTA KINABALU: There are no more principals below the DG52 grade in Sabah while the remaining 155 senior assistants in secondary schools are expected to receive their letters of promotion to DG48 level by next month.

This is in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's aspiration that 1,228 principals and 6,585 senior assistants in secondary schools nationwide would be promoted to DG52 and DG48 levels, respectively.

State Education director Datuk Dr Muhiddin Yusin, in handing promotion letters to 54 principals and 370 senior assistants at SJK (C) Lok Yuk Likas here yesterday, said all promotions had been backdated to Jan 1.

"I don't have the figure (of principals in Sabah) but we have 214 secondary schools, including fully residential schools, technical schools and Islamic religious schools, where two are already holding Jusa (C) grade and some excellent principals are on the DG54 grade.

"The principals at today's ceremony are those still in DG48. So, with this, all principals are in DG52 or above."

He said with their appointment to