



Paw Prints

Jodi Schneider McNamee
Columnist

Fear-biting in dogs

Big or small, male or female, young or old, any dog can bite. Even the sweetest pet can bite if provoked.

Dogs bite as a reaction to something. If a pooch finds himself in a stressful situation, he may bite to defend himself or his territory. Dogs may bite because they have been startled or feel threatened. Or they can bite to protect something that is valuable to them, like their pups, their food, or a toy. Dogs can bite when they aren't feeling well. And dogs can bite when they become fearful or scared.

Sometimes well-meaning people try to comfort a dog that appears timid, shy, or nervous. But that is exactly what you shouldn't do; it can cause the dog to react with a bite.

To the dog, an approaching stranger might be too much to handle; panic sets in and he reacts with a bite.

Monica Rendon, certified dog trainer for Three Rivers Humane Society, notes that all aggression in dogs (with the exception of neurological issues) has its root in fear.

The dogs' fear may come out of losing a coveted resource, fear of pain, fear of hunger, fear of the unknown, fear of strangers, fear of being confined, etc.

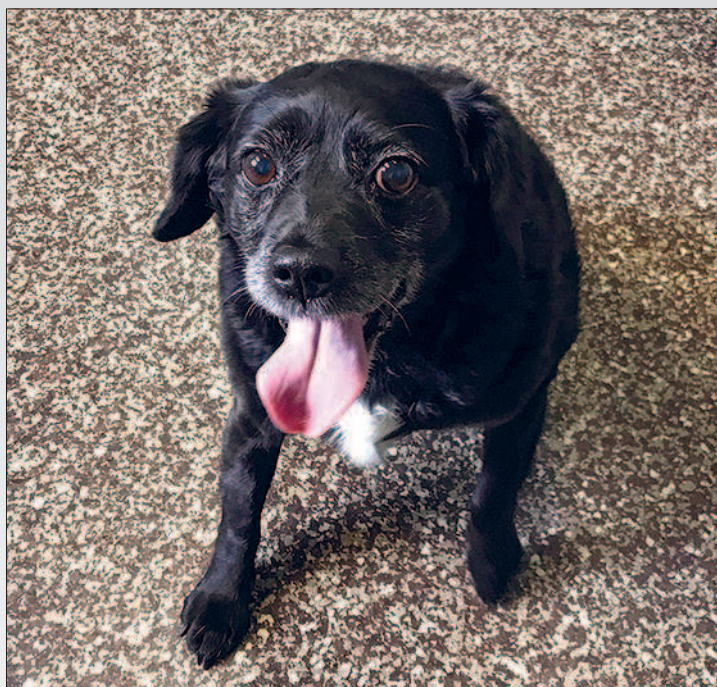


PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Fiona was a fear-biter. Caring professionals have worked with her to get her ready for adoption.

Fear is at aggression's core.

Aggressive behavior includes growling, lip lifting, barking, snapping, lunging, and biting.

So how does a dog's fearful behavior start? Some dogs are just born with shy and timid personalities; some are more prone to anxiety; and yet others may have been spooked by something or someone as a puppy, causing a life-long phobia to develop. And unfortunately, some develop fearfulness as a direct result of unpleasant past experiences with abuse or abandonment issues.

So, what can you do to help your fearful dog?

A fearful dog needs lots of confidence-building and reassurance. Once his confidence is stronger you can begin to desensitize him to the fearful triggers.

Rendon added that working with a fearful dog takes time, patience, some skill, and a willingness to let the dog make the choice whether to interact with his human or not. The end result can be amazing. To see a fearful dog transform from showing all kinds of aggression to one who can relax, peacefully coexist, and even

enjoy contact with a human is the big payoff.

And since dogs learn by association, fearful associations can be reversed, or alternative behaviors can be taught, giving the fearful dog a life worth living.

Rendon is helping Fiona, a past fear-biter, to look for a forever home that can show her that whatever happened in her past will no longer be a worry in her future. The right foster/adopter will be willing to use positive behavior modification and should have a very low-key, predictable schedule with limited activity and visitors. Fiona is about 8.5 years old, house trained, she loves to go for walks, and she is very sweet and affectionate toward the humans she trusts and has bonded with.

Rendon said, "With the right coaching, there are lots of alternative ways to get what you want without force or correction."

Whoever adopts Fiona will be provided with professional training support, advice, and assistance. For more information on Fiona call BrightSide Animal Center in Redmond at 541-923-0882.

RECITAL: Dancers have succeeded in competition

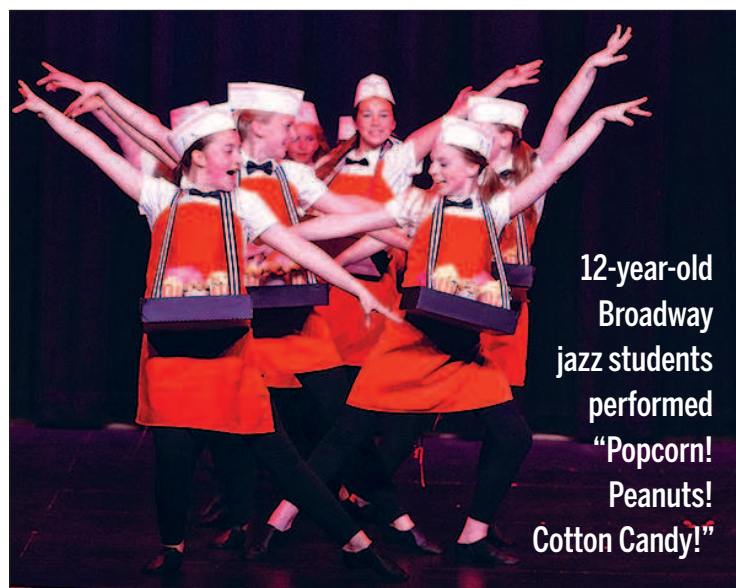
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choreographers/teachers were Lonnie Liddell, Kayla Williams, Shannon Abero, Jordi Weaver, Tiffany Lynn Bell and Sharri Bertanga. Two new teachers this year were Liz Warren, teaching contemporary; and Kendra Kemp teaching jazz.

The dance academy had a guest choreographer direct the opening number of the second act, "Carnival of Venice." Professional ballet dancer and choreographer Joshua Deininger also choreographed the senior ballet students in a piece so they were able to enter the "Turn

it Up" competition in Eugene earlier this year.

"We took five group acts to competition, two duets and eight soloists to compete this year," Liddell said. "All the entries received very high rankings and we came away feeling so proud of all our dancers' accomplishments. We featured the performers in a special showcase in May; however, since two of our entries ranked highest scoring in their division, we allowed them to perform in this recital. Makenna Liddell earned the highest score in the intermediate division for her solo, and Kamryn Osborne and Mackenzi Reed earned the highest score in the intermediate division overall for their duet. These are huge honors and we are so glad their efforts were recognized."



12-year-old Broadway jazz students performed "Popcorn! Peanuts! Cotton Candy!"

PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

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