

## Parents, Kids and your Pets

Everyone can coexist in harmony given a few common sense rules of the household and an understanding of basic animal behavior. Here are tips to share with your family.

### **Respect the pets need to sleep, eat and use the bathroom undisturbed.**

- ?? Provide a crate or room where the pet can escape. Just like humans need their time away so do pets. This will also provide a place for the pet to go where no one is allowed to mess with them. Everyone in the family should be taught that if the pet is in the crate, then you leave the pet alone. No teasing with fingers or other items. No dragging pet out of crate.
- ?? How many of us like people bugging us will we eat? Avoid situations that might make the pet food aggressive. If the pet tends to be food aggressive regardless, you should feed them in their crate or up on something until the issue can be addressed with a professional.
- ?? Make sure your cats litter box is placed in its escape place if possible. This will help assure that they will use it no matter what is going on in the house. Animals tend to like privacy, like we do, when taking care of bathroom duties. Do not pick on the pet while this is happening.

### **Parents need to teach kids how to behave around animals. Parents must realize that most pets do not consider children as figures of authority. Pets need to be taught how to behave around the family.**

- ?? Never stare at or corner a pet. Adults tend to do this as an authority figure, but make sure you are trained on how to do this with your pet.
- ?? Pets do not like quick movements, loud toys, or high-pitched screams. A child running past screaming can be bitten or scratched by the pet because the pet may react as they would to the distress sounds of prey animals. On the other hand the dog could react to protect his family and hurt a visitor. **NEVER SCREAM AND RUN PAST AN ANIMAL.**
- ?? Pets should not be left alone with a child less than 8 years of age. If you leave the room where both kids and pets are, you need to either take the pet or the kids with you. Even if it is just to answer the phone or see who is at the door.
- ?? Dogs should be monitored frequently when left alone in a fenced backyard to assure that neighborhood children do not tease him. A teased dog will eventually learn to hate children and can turn aggressive to protect himself. NEVER tie a dog in the yard and leave him unattended. Most bites occur when children run upon a tied dog.
- ?? Kids should be taught to pat the pet gently...do not let them hang on the pet's neck, try to ride like a horse, or tease. Some pets when provoked or hurt can become aggressive.
- ?? Teach the proper method of handling. Never allow the child to pick up the pet by the neck or the belly. Pets tend to scratch or bite a child when they feel like they are not held securely. Children tend to get excited and can use more force than necessary; many children squeeze far too tightly. A pet should be picked up and held with one hand under the chest and the other one supporting the hindquarters.
- ?? Do not play tug of war with a pet. He will learn that anything he can grab is his, which will lead to him grabbing toys, clothes, etc. Also, if you lose the tug of war game, he can see himself as dominant over you.
- ?? Never allow rough handling or hand wrestling with the pet. This teaches the pet that hands or any part of you are fair game. Instead make sure a toy is in your hand.
- ?? Do not expect children to assume full responsibility for the care of your pet. All family members should take part in the care. Monitor any care your child may give the pet to make sure it is done properly.

### **Consult with your vet or animal behaviorist if you notice any problems between your new pet and family. An obedience-trained pet will live a happier and healthier life.**