

ARE BULL TERRIERS GOOD WITH CHILDREN?

By Peggy Arnaud - Ragged Hill

Haven't we all been asked this question many times? Yes, if raised with children, a bull terrier is a perfect companion - gentle and aware of the child's fragility. Haven't we all watched a great lump of dog play quietly on the floor with babies, then without warning, hurl itself upon an unsuspecting adult with sufficient force to practically land him in the intensive care unit.

So I would like to ask this question - Are Bull Terriers Good With Adults? Not one of my dogs has ever laid a tooth on me, but the damage to my person has, over the years, been considerable.

One rainy morning I was standing in the driveway watching my husband back out the car when Muffin came flat out around the corner of the house carrying a length of 2 X 4. What she was intending to do with this piece of lumber has never been determined - it is possible that she was becoming bored with the demolition trade and was about to enter the construction business. Turning at her approach, I received the full impact of the wood on my shinbone and was knocked to the ground by the force where I lay screaming with pain and fury. Muff observed this odd behavior for a moment, then deciding she had heard all those words before (usually directed to her anyway), she retrieved her wooden weapon, and spinning it around with the grace and agility of a baton twirler, connected neatly with the back of my head as I was attempting to get to my feet. The impact returned me to my previous horizontal position, this time face down. My husband, who witnessed the entire performance, informed later that the timing was superb - worthy of the best Keystone Cops or the Marx Brothers. But he delayed his departure, herded the menace into her kennel and inquired through his merriment if I was hurt. Stating I thought I might live long enough to murder the wretched bitch, I was helped to my feet but found I could not put any weight on the injured leg, and my scalp was cut and bleeding - so a trip to the accident room of the local hospital was thought advisable.

Being my first visit for emergency treatment, I was not prepared for the volume of information required. Name, address, occupation are routine - but, how, when and why!....(I am an obstetrical nurse, and our patients are admitted onto the floor with a minimum of questions. We know *why* they are there, and we know *how* it happened and we assume the patient knows too, although sometimes one wonders!)

The admitting nurse was efficient and thorough. Vital statistics dealt with unexpected questions. "Now, how did this accident happen?" "Well," I said, "You see, my dog has this big piece of wood in her mouth, and she hit me with it."

"Your dog?"

"Yes."

"I see, - and the head wound?"

"Well - my dog did that too."

"With a piece of wood?"

"Yes, - it was the same piece of wood actually."

"I see."

“Well,” I said, coming swiftly to Muffin’s defense, “of course, she didn’t mean to, she sort of spun around, and she had this piece of wood in her mouth, you see - and, well - she hit me with it - I was sitting in the driveway at the time ...”

Our local hospital does not have a psychiatric floor, but I could see by the expression on the nurse’s face that she was aware of the desperate need for one. I was X-rayed, treated amid controlled giggles from the staff, and released.

The next major incident followed swiftly. (Minor ones occur almost daily.) The paddock gate is, of necessity, sturdy built of oak and heavy. It opens inward. Every day I collect each dog after his play period. I call them from whatever act of mayhem they may be committing, push open the gate and bend down ready to snap on the lead. For three hundred and sixty-four days of the year, Bloody Mary had galloped to the gate, come around it, and been leashed in the usual fashion. On this particular day, whether due to a whim or perhaps because the moon was in Aquarius, she chose to project herself at approximately the speed of light from the far corner of the paddock, and instead of coming around the gate, she leapt at it with all the force of her fifty pounds of muscle, slamming it shut on my head. I went down like a pole-axed ox and remained down and out long enough for the murderous beast to remove and eat the bait-biscuits from my pocket - she also removed and apparently ate the pocket. A small hairpiece I was wearing has never been seen again - presumably it was quickly killed and buried. Staggering to a lawn chair, I sat holding my head and considering an early retirement from dog breeding, while Mary amused herself by eating the geraniums.

This pastoral scene continued for awhile until my neighbor drove up, took one look at me, and insisted - yes, you guessed it - on a trip to the Emergency Room.

The last thing I wished to do on this earth was to return to the hospital where, after the Muffin episode, there exists some doubt as to my sanity. I am known locally as “that kook who lives up on the hill with those funny looking white things she says are dogs”. But feeling too sick to argue or resist, I was firmly placed in the car and hurried off to my fate.

And so it came to pass that once again I presented myself at the local Emergency Room. Of course, the admitting nurse was the same as before, the staff also. Approaching the desk in embarrassed misery - torn clothing, wild hair, a great lump on my forehead and eyes blackening fast, I am greeted by an obviously wary nurse - “Goodness, Mrs. Arnaud, sit down. Whatever happened to you now?”

I take a deep breath, (Oh, God will get you for this, Bloody Mary), and with visions of padded cells looming large in my future, “Well”, I said, “you see - my dog ...”

Are Bull Terriers Good With Children?

Oh, yes. They are lovely.

Are Bull Terriers Good With Adults?

Well, I am an adult, and they are not good with me, and I have the scars - on my body, my furniture and my psyche - to prove it.

(Reprinted from the COLKET MEMORIAL BOOK OF BULL TERRIERS - 1976)