

Dog's Nipping May Be Related to Breed

Though the Australian Cattle Dog will naturally nip livestock, nipping children is unacceptable.

By Allan Reznik

Q. I have a 15-month-old Australian Cattle Dog. She has "nipped" a 2 year old in the thigh and recently went for a 3-year-old child's hands. She looks very aggressive when she does this but we are confused because breed information says it's instinctive not aggressive. We just had a baby (4 months now) and we are concerned about her hurting him. What can we do to train or curb this instinct? Is she a danger to our child? Thank you very much for your help.

A. For the sake of your new baby and to save yourselves from a very likely law suit as well as the euthanasia of your dog, please find a dog trainer who can help you set limits on your dog's behavior.

Yes, Australian Cattle Dogs, like other Herding breeds, will naturally nip cattle and other livestock – and they'll try nipping children too, if you allow it. However, being mouthy and nipping humans is totally unacceptable. You must intervene, give the dog other outlets for his energy and break him of his nipping.

Australian Cattle Dogs can be pig-headed but this behavior cannot continue. If the parent of a child your dog nipped called the authorities they could seize your dog and have it euthanized.

Dogs can demonstrate many socially unacceptable behaviors, from chewing to nipping to knocking young children over in their exuberance. Aggression may not be at the core of the behavior but the behavior still cannot be allowed to continue unchecked.