

## Golden Retriever Puppy Bites When Handled

**Resistance to being touched or picked up may be a sign of pain.**

*By September Morn*

Q. My 11-week-old Golden Retriever puppy growls and bites when she doesn't want us to do something, like pet and pick her up. I didn't think it was normal for Golden Retrievers to be so aggressive. I've read a lot of websites and books. Some say this behavior is very bad, but others say it just means she's tired or wants something, such as food or water. Her growling and biting is so bad, I think it may be a temperament issue, and not something that can be fixed in puppy obedience classes.

I've had Labradors all my life, and they never acted like this. It's so bad that we're thinking of selling the pup or giving her away. Otherwise, she's very smart and has already learned so much for only being 11 weeks old. Her aggression also seems to have decreased since I've started training her. She knows her name, Sit, Lie down, Stand, Speak, Shake, and Wait. She isn't aggressive all the time, even when I take away her food and water. So from what I've been reading, she isn't source guarding.

A. Resistance to being touched or picked up is sometimes a dog's way of telling us she's in pain, so you should have the veterinarian check your pup carefully to make sure she's OK. At around three to four months, many large breed pups start resisting being picked up, because as they get bigger, it's harder for us to pick them up without making them uncomfortable. Unless you really need to pick up your Golden, let her walk. When you do need to pick her up, keep her horizontal and support her under both her chest and back end so she feels secure and stable in your arms.

If your pup's breeder is experienced with Golden Retrievers, be sure to bring this behavior to his attention and ask if any of your pup's siblings are showing this kind of irritable, aggressive behavior. If several pups in the litter act like that, it may be a temperament issue. In most cases, fortunately, this grumpy resistance to being fiddled with is a training matter and just a phase to be worked through. From what you've said, it sounds like the training you've been doing is improving your pup's behavior and attitude, so keep it up!