

Third of dog owners have been bitten or attacked by their pet

- **1.3 million dogs in UK have behavioural problems**
- **Poor training is behind the figure, according to PDSA**

By John Stevens

They are supposed to be a man's best friend.

But it seems a new generation of dogs are not so well behaved.

A third of dog owners have being bitten or attacked by a dog, it has been revealed.

The rise of the unruly dogs has been blamed on a lack of discipline when they were puppies when their owners could not be bothered to have them trained properly.



Snarl: A third of dog owners have been bitten, according to new research. File picture

The leading veterinary charity the PDSA has warned that millions of dogs are more aggressive due to gaps in their pet knowledge.

A study of pet owners by the charity found that around **5.3million dogs (some 61 per cent)** never attended training classes within the first six months of life. It said 1.3 million dogs across the UK are now displaying behavioural problems.

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The 2012 PDSA Animal Welfare Report found that a fifth of dog owners in the East of England reported that their dogs show problem behaviour on a regular basis.

This was closely followed by the North East (19 per cent) and Yorkshire and Humber (19 per cent).



Undisciplined: A lack of or poor training is behind the alarming figure, according to the PDSA. File picture

The area of the UK with the least reported problem behaviour in dogs was Wales (8 per cent).

The research revealed that almost one in three (30 per cent) dog owners have been bitten or attacked by a dog with over half (51 per cent) knowing someone else who has.

While in some cases dogs are deliberately trained to be aggressive, the report found that the primary cause of the anti-social behaviour is a lack of socialisation and basic obedience training when dogs are young .

David Ryan, Clinical Animal Behaviourist and former Chair of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors said: 'Good puppy socialisation and training classes undoubtedly help to reduce the initial development of aggression, but it is also essential to provide our pets with guidance in good behaviour, at home and elsewhere, throughout their lives.

'Training should be synonymous with 'living with' and never stops.'

PDSA Senior Veterinary Surgeon, Sean Wensley, said: 'Each year there are awful stories of dogs attacking pets and people, sometimes with fatal consequences.

'Tackling this begins with owners and breeders taking full responsibility for their dogs' behaviour and adequately socialising and training them from a young age.

'It is also essential that young people understand how to be safe around all pets and learn how to become caring and responsible owners in the future.

'In PDSA's view, this should include learning about a pet's five welfare needs at school as well as from other responsible adults around them.'