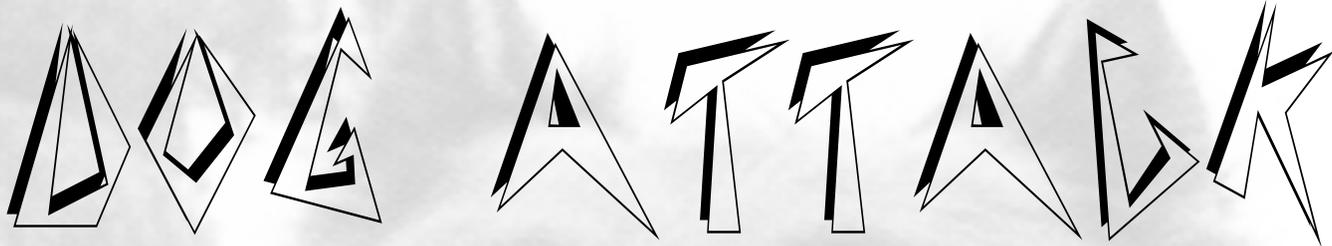


How to Survive a



By Jane Eden

Based on statistics obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, every year 4.7 million people suffer a dog attack in the United States. Of this number, 800,000 require medical attention, and 17 result in death. Despite leash laws and animal control programs, dogs roam free in city streets, suburbs, and rural and remote areas. Generally, dog attacks occur in average neighborhoods while people walk, jog or exercise their own dogs.

"I took my Huskies out on their leashes late one evening," says Phil in Oklahoma. "We had only gone a block when a Golden Retriever charged out of the bushes and attacked my dogs. It wasn't until I managed to separate the dogs that I felt blood trickling down my leg where the Retriever had sunk his teeth into my thigh."

Phil's story is not unusual, according to Mark Minnerly, owner of *The Dallas Dog Trainer*; Dallas, Texas. "Dogs frequently attack other dogs who stray into their territory. If people get in the way, they get bit. Dogs are pack animals, territorial by nature."

"Some dogs possess a stronger instinct than others," says Minnerly. "The profile of killer dogs has changed over the last 15 years. Great Danes were responsible for the largest percentage of fatal attacks in 1979. In 1995 and 1996 Rottweilers killed 11 of 22 dog attack victims. However it's important to remember that Rottweilers are owned in greater numbers these days."

All dogs test the water during new encounters. They immediately try to

access who you are, why you are there, and who's in charge. If the person or dog under attack acts correctly, it may diffuse the situation.

How to Avoid a Dog Attack

The best way to avoid an attack is to avoid a strange dog's territory — but that's not always possible. If a dog is charging at you, you must quickly determine what type of attack the dog has in mind.

"Dog aggression really takes two forms — defensive or offensive," says Minnerly. "If a dog feels threatened, he growls and moves away from you hoping you'll do the same."

"If he moves closer, it's best to stand still, maintain good posture and keep your eye on him," says Minnerly. "Try talking. Use a soothing tone. Call for the owner. Hopefully, he'll call off his dog. Watch the dog closely. Pivot to face him, if necessary. Don't shout or make threatening body movements. This might make the dog shift from defensive to offensive mode."

If the encounter takes place in an open area, a steady gaze lets the dog know you feel confident and may discourage an attack. Usually, a fearful dog will back off after a few minutes. However, if the confrontation takes place in a confined space, you might want to stare at a point on the dog's body rather than directly at his face. If a fearful dog feels cornered, a direct gaze may goad him to attack. If the dog operates off the herding instinct, he will want to chase you down and bite you on the heels or the buttocks. But generally they aren't bold

enough to bite you if you face them. Never let the dog get behind you.

You can easily recognize an aggressive dog by its bark. It says, come on over here. I'm going to have you for lunch. An aggressive dog doesn't try to scare you away. Instead, he dares you to do something. Often an aggressive dog will move in close and snarl in your face, teeth bared, or charge you in an attempt to make you run so he can give chase.

Most dog attacks take place when an unsupervised dog charges up to investigate a dog on a leash. "It's a dog's nature to investigate the new dog by sticking his nose in the new dog's crotch," says Minnerly. "Dogs instinctively attack the stomach because gut wounds nearly always prove fatal. It's a lot like the way lions bring down prey in the wild. If you get in the way, the dog will bite you, too. The worst thing you can do during a dog attack is run," says Minnerly. "If you run, the dog sees you as prey, and he'll chase you down."

"Dogs in the wild don't usually present a problem," says Minnerly. "Most are loners and go out of their way to avoid humans. They are looking for food, not trouble. They live on mice, rats and sometimes small or injured deer. If you encounter a wild dog accidentally, it usually runs away."

On the other hand, dogs running in packs can prove extremely dangerous. "They feed off each other's excitement," says Minnerly. "They may attack larger prey than normal. They do things a lone dog would never try. Sometimes they attack pets or livestock."

"During a recession in Alaska in the

Today, many people carry one-hand-opening pocket knives. If you should find yourself forced to the ground by an attacking dog, you may use your free hand to help fend off the dog. Draw and open the knife with the other hand. Prepare to attack the dog's eyes, jaw or chest.

'70s, people moved away leaving their property and dogs behind," says Minnerly, who lived in Alaska at the time.

"Dogs banded together in packs and roamed the streets searching for food. They'd come into your yard and eat your dog while he sat chained to a tree if you weren't careful."

What to Do if Things Get Nasty

If the unthinkable happens, and a vicious dog attacks you or someone you love, quickly search your environment for weapons to hold the dog at bay. If a bite is truly inevitable and you find no weapons at close range, use a shirt or jacket to wrap your weak-sided arm. Offer the protected arm to the dog as a distraction while you call for help or attempt to back to safety. Often in a frenzied attempt to get at you, an attacking dog will bite almost anything. A stick, a bag or a book may provide a valuable substitute for an arm or leg as you try to escape. It's always a good idea to carry weapons such as mace, a knife or even a handgun. Real survivalists carry more than one weapon. Two knives, one carried on each side prepares you to survive an incapacitating wound to either your right or left side and allows you to fight on.

If you carry a knife, cut the throat, stab the eyes or the face of the dog for the quickest reaction. Stabs to the body don't always take effect in time to prevent the dog from biting you. Attacking the dog's face, jaw muscles or throat will disable it quicker and may prevent serious injury to the person.

If you carry a small caliber gun, aim

for the dog's head/brain; a body shot may not bring the dog down immediately. If you carry a large caliber gun, aim for the body. The impact alone can significantly disrupt the attack. However, it takes time to draw a gun. Statistics indicate a person attacking you may run 19 feet before you can pull a gun from a holster and shoot. Many dogs run faster than the average person.

If serious attack becomes unavoidable and you are:

Unarmed

- search the immediate vicinity for weapons
- wrap your weaker arm in clothing and use it to distract the dog
- call for the owner
- back to safety

Armed

- use mace or other spray to subdue the dog
- use knife to stab jaw muscles, face, eyes or throat of dog
- fire small caliber gun at dog's head
- fire large caliber gun at dog's body

It's important to know that dogs always follow the survival of the fittest principal unless extensively trained to do otherwise.

"I've had police officers down on the ground under attack by a criminal. When the policeman calls his dog for help, the dog attacks him," says Minnerly, "because he's on the bottom of the pile. It takes a lot of training to overcome a dog's natural instinct." ★

