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PAW'S CORNER

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By Sam Mazotta



Energetic pup's biting is not acceptable

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I have an Australian Shepherd, "Drogo," who is just under a year old. He's super smart, very energetic and responds very well to training. He's been well-behaved until recently, when he started jumping toward my boyfriend and play-biting at his hands. I've worked with Drogo for months to stop this behavior with visitors, and even paid for a professional trainer. He knows my boyfriend, so I don't understand why he suddenly started targeting one person. What can I do? — Jeannie G. in Boulder, Colorado

DEAR JEANNIE: Give the trainer a call to let him know about this new behavior. My first thought is that Drogo, who's passing through his "teen" stage, is testing boundaries with your boyfriend — and you.

This isn't unusual, especially with a super energetic, bright and observant dog. Drogo may be figuring out the hierarchy within your household, learning who's the boss and who's a member of the pack — and how far he can push them.

Play-biting is an instinctive form of play, but it isn't acceptable behavior. Reinforce Drogo's basic obedience training so that he responds to your commands. Your boyfriend should participate in obedience training as well, learning basic commands, so that Drogo responds to him in the way that you want him to.

The trainer should also have some supplemental advice to reinforce what you and Drogo learned from them.

Further, because Drogo is still energetic and probably a bit spazzy (like a typical teenager), make sure he gets more activity every day — time outside running, longer walks on a leash and more one-on-one training time. Scatter some puzzle toys around the house to keep him occupied and to burn off even more energy.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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