

## **DETHRONING THE DOMINANT DOG**

by Terena Thomas

The domesticated dog still has instinctual needs passed on from its ancestors. One of these needs is a pecking order from the strongest leader dog to the weakest submissive member of the pack. With a few key changes in your daily interactions with your pooch you can quickly and effectively become the leader to your dog. When he is attempting to dominate members of your household he is often times setting himself up for inner conflict which is exhibited through barking, chewing and other destructive behavior. All dominant dogs that have an unhealthy relationship with their people will eventually start showing signs of this conflict so by taking care of it now you and your family will be happier and safer and your dog will feel more secure and confident in what you expect from him.



There are four areas in which the leader of the household must dominate and take control. These are feeding time, sleeping arrangements, playtime and grooming. Simple obedience and a few key habits to get into are also healthy recommendations that we'll cover.

1. **Feeding time-** The pack leaders (you and your family)) should **ALWAYS** eat first. Make your dog's meal at the same time you make the family meal. Let him watch you make it and let him see that **YOU** are eating first. When you and your family are done eating it is time for your dog to eat. He must earn his meal by sitting or doing compliancy behaviors of some sort. The sit stay with the bowl is an excellent choice for this. Practice taking the bowl away from him as he eats and placing something tasty in it and then giving it back to him. If he growls or shows his teeth at you as you approach his bowl then tether him on a leash and have another person hold the leash as you move the bowl away from him with a broom stick. This keeps you out of harms way. Do not yell or reprimand this behavior as it could escalate into a full blown attack. Place the treat on top of the food and give the bowl back. Do this often so he will eventually look forward to you taking his dish from him.

2. **Sleeping arrangements-** In the dog world the leader of the pack sleeps in the highest place. Your dog may be using your bed to establish his dominance with you. As of today he is only allowed in the master bedroom if he is comfortably in a crate on the floor. If you don't have a crate then he needs to be tethered to the bed leg with enough room to move comfortably but not long enough to reach the foot of the bed. He may whine and cry to try to manipulate you to let him run free. This is a perfect time to teach him to be quiet. If the whining persists for longer than a week then he will have to be forever forbidden to enter the master bedroom. He is **NEVER** allowed on any furniture especially the bed **EVER**. Keep him off the couches and chairs with aluminum foil or wax paper until you have taught him where you **DO** want him to be.

**3. Playtime- Never play tug-o-war, chase, wrestle or tag with a dog that is confused with his place in the family. These games only teach them they are faster, smarter, more agile, stronger and wittier than his human family. In order for him to trust you as leader you must show him you are faster, smarter, more agile, stronger and wittier than he is. Games such as retrieve, tricks, buster cubes and games involving obedience or compliance are excellent choices. You must always initiate playtime and end playtime.**

**4. Grooming- Two people are needed to accomplish this task successfully. One needs to hold the dog so he doesn't fuss and try to bite the brush or groomer. The holder needs to have one hand under the dogs chin to control the mouth and one under the dog's midsection to keep them from sitting or lying down. If you have a Gentle Leader place it on the dog for more control. The groomer should start brushing gently over the dogs back and loins. Brush the dog's sides, chest and stomach. When the dog quits struggling move the brush to the hind legs and lift each hind leg and comb through the hair. Move to the front of the dog. The holder needs to be very careful here. Let go of the hind end and place both hands to either side of the dogs head to keep him from nipping at the groomer. The groomer should then proceed to lift each front leg to gently sweep the brush over the entire leg. The groomer should then stand up and walk out of the room. Standing up, the holder may now let go of the dog. This should be done daily for the first week or until your pooch quits struggling and accepts the grooming. After that it should be done weekly until you or any member of your family can groom your dog without a fuss or holder.**

**Your pooch should have to earn what he gets. If you have leftovers you want to share ask him to lie down. If you want to go for a walk he must sit nicely and wait for you to open the door. You should always be the first through doorways and up or down stairs and he should never walk in front of you as that continually reinforces in his mind that he's taking YOU for a walk. Always make your pup be obedient and compliant.**

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