

## **BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS WITH DOGS!**

Problems can be seen in dogs from all walks of life and may appear to be more common now than in the past. All too often the owners response to a problem is to let the dog roam or surrender the dog to the warden service.

These problems may be due to the way that our lifestyles have changed. Many more dogs are left alone at home whilst we are out at work and in the home they are treated as members of the family, rather than a worker or just a 'pet'.

### **Why do problems occur?**

Problems occur for a variety of reasons. Each dog and case is different, and causes can be very simple or complicated. Your dog's problem(s) could be caused by one or several of the following factors:

**Lack of socialisation** - From the extremely sensitive age of 3-14 weeks of age, puppies need to be safely exposed to as many different and new experiences as possible to prepare them for later life. Dogs that have not had this early socialisation may grow to be fearful of people, places and things and this can lead to many problems including aggression.

**Boredom** - Dogs that are bored through lack of mental stimulation or 'things to do', may amuse themselves with destructive behaviour, for example.

**Excess energy** - A lack of physical exercise can also lead to 'bad behaviour', as a dog must find an outlet for his pent-up energy.

**Owner behaviour** - Owners can inadvertently train their dogs to 'behave badly' by giving attention at the wrong time.

**Unrealistic owner expectations** - Because we tend to get very close to our dogs, we sometimes forget that they are still animals. We may credit them with more 'intelligence' or 'awareness' than they really have and this is when misunderstandings can occur.

**Breed specific traits** – Certain types and breeds of dog have been bred for hundreds of years for specific tasks, which may be incompatible with living in a family environment – unless special considerations are made.

**Diet** - It is thought that some dogs' behaviour may be affected by what they are fed. It is possible that diets that are too high in protein or the wrong type of protein may cause hyperactivity in certain dogs. Allergies to certain ingredients may also adversely affect behaviour.

**Inadequate or incorrect training** - Without adequate training dogs may be uncontrollable. Owners become frustrated and cross when this happens and cross with the dog will worsen it's behaviour. Often these dogs are left to roam or surrendered to the warden.