



SUSAN ([www.happyhoundstraining.co.uk](http://www.happyhoundstraining.co.uk)) is a professional dog trainer and behaviourist who runs Happy Hounds Dog Training & Behaviour, which provides puppy and dog training classes, specialist Greyhound-only activities, 1-2-1 training and behaviour consults. Susan holds a BSc (Hons) in canine behaviour and training, and is also a full member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, UK, the Association of Professional Dog Trainers and the Pet Professional Guild.

Susan loves all dogs but her particular passion is retired racing greyhounds. She has worked with the Retired Greyhound Trust (RGT) – revising and re-writing its training leaflets – and has presented at a number of national and international conferences, talking about Greyhounds.

Susan lives with her husband, retired racing Greyhound, Jasper, Awa, a young rescued Greyhound, Sherlock, a Saluki puppy and a rescue cat called Dennis. Susan's philosophy is to provide dog training and behaviour advice that is practical and realistic for the 21st century dog owner.

### **What is the best way to stop my puppy from nipping people's ankles or is this just something she will grow out of?**

Nipping and play-biting are a natural part of a puppy's development; however this type of behaviour is not much fun for us, as puppy teeth are very sharp! Unfortunately, it is not a behaviour that a puppy will simply grow out of.

To prevent the nipping from continuing, you need to channel your puppy's behaviour into an alternative activity, such as playing with toys. To do this, you will need to ensure that your puppy enjoys playing with toys and you will need to actively encourage her to play and interact with you when you have a large soft toy to hand. Teaching games such as 'tug' and 'fetch' with toys can all help channel this behaviour and use up puppy energy. Provide regular opportunities for play, particularly around the times when you know that your puppy is likely to want to bite your ankles.

Once she has learned to enjoy playing with toys, you will need to adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach for any occasion where she tries to nip your ankles. In practice, this means remaining calm and still whenever her teeth make contact with your ankles, and that all interaction stops, immediately. Do not yelp, shout, or flap your ankles. Simply stop playing and withdraw attention for a few seconds. If your puppy continues to try to nip, keep calm, move away slowly and the split second that she is calm, offer her the toy and resume the game. Dogs learn by association and consequence, and she will soon learn that biting/nipping you (association) leads to zero attention (consequence) and instead, that playing nicely with a toy (association) leads to positive attention and interactions



with you (consequence).

### **Every year fireworks are an issue for my dog so I was wondering what your best advice to keep my dog calm and happy when fireworks are going off?**

There are a number of traditional and homeopathic remedies that have been found to be very useful at alleviating anxiety, however it is very important that you discuss any treatments with your vet before you start using them.

If your vet prescribes a medication, it is often useful to have a 'practice run' before firework season. This allows you to see how your dog responds to the medication and whether an alternative is required. It is also worth considering that some medications and remedies (such as ACP) only deal with the symptoms of anxiety, and although your dog may appear outwardly calmer the fear itself has not gone away. Don't be afraid to discuss the medication with your vet.

There are a number of calming remedies available, with the most well-known being ADAPTIL – a synthetic version of the dog appeasing pheromone – which has proven to be beneficial in lessening anxiety for some dogs. It is available as a collar, plug in diffuser and spray, and ideally should be used in the weeks running up to bonfire night. A tight fitting, calming coat may help too and, again, should be gradually introduced to the dog in the weeks before the fireworks begin. This helps to ensure that the dog does not just associate its use with the sudden appearance of fireworks.

Creating a den/safe-haven for your dog is also a great idea. The den should be in an area where your dog feels happy and most comfortable, such as by the side of your bed, in their crate, under a table, under the stairs, or wherever your dog feels safe. It should not be located by a window or an outside wall, as any sounds and vibrations are likely to be heard and felt more.

Finally, don't be afraid to reassure your dog! Contrary to popular belief, you cannot reinforce fear by reassuring your dog with a gentle massage or cuddles (if they like being touched) and talking in a soft voice. Just leaving your dog to go 'cold turkey' with something they're afraid of is more like to reinforce their fear, and increase their anxiety.