



Behaviour Issues: MOUTHING

Labs mouth for several reasons, one is it's a natural thing for Labs as they Love things in their mouths. That is what they were bred and selected for their ability for retrieving. The other main reasons are excitement and just plain being demanding.

The main thing you need to fix a lot of behaviour issues is a good relationship with your dog and what we mean by that is a good obedience foundation. Does your dog respond to you in one command, does he/she still jump up or pull you on walks. If so, you should consider enrolling your dog in obedience classes.

The other thing you need to consider, is your dog getting enough exercise? Remember a tired dog is a happy dog. A dog that is not getting enough time exercising will be more demanding of you and it often causes behavioural problems. The best game to play with your Lab is, guess what? Retrieving! This is what Labs love most in this world. We recommend either a street hockey type of ball (tennis balls wear away the enamel on teeth) or a bumper that is used to teach retrievers in the field, these are made of plastic or canvas. Both you can get at your local pet store. Start by doing retrieves either in a fenced in area or on a long line so you know your dog will bring it back to you. As puppies hallways work perfect to teach them to come right back to you.

We have found that most mouthing problems are due to a demanding dog and one of the best ways to reduce and eliminate mouthing is to ignore the dog. Dogs love attention even if it is negative.

When you are around your dog watch for signs that he is going to start mouthing; it is not hard to see that glint in their eye. As soon as he even thinks about mouthing turn your back on him and ignore him. Over time your dog will realize that mouthing isn't going to get him the attention he wants and the behaviour should diminish on its own.

If your dog is mouthing people when they first enter your home, there is a good article already on this site that will help as the same methods will be used for jumping up as you need control at the door. Your Lab will just be mouthing because they are excited and you may even see them grabbing a toy when people come to the door. Go back to basics and put the dog on the lead and reward calm behaviour around people.

If your Lab is mouthing while you are trying to groom him or trim his nails, have someone help you and put him on lead to keep him under control and have that person give the dog treats to distract him from what you are doing. Keep the sessions short even if it's just getting the brush or clippers out and make him sit calmly then move forward slowly to one brush stroke or clip one nail. The dog will improve the more you practice. **It takes patience but it is worth it in the end.**

To correct any behavioural problem in dogs the whole family must be involved and be consistent. If one family member accepts the mouthing, the dog will probably always try to mouth and see what he can get away with and it will take a lot longer to correct. If you still have difficulties with your Lab mouthing, please consult a good professional trainer in your area. *Article written by Pat*