

Appendix 14

PetStay Supporting Statement for Home Boarding Condition 5.8.3

(Cabinet report on proposal to update and adopt animal licencing conditions)

Extract from email dated 17th August 2015, from the franchise holder for PetStay in Gloucestershire:

"My feeling is that not regardless of a child's age, not every dog is right for children and not every child is right for a dog.

I think the licence should be two fold – much like it doesn't allow a dog to be boarded in a house with a cat when the dog doesn't live with a cat at home – the same should be applied to children. That if there are not children at home then the dog should not be placed with a host family who has children.

With regards to the age:

The majority of dog/child problems I have encountered involve children under six years of age (this is within a personal capacity not professional).

Also, parents with small children are usually very busy as children under 7 are not capable of carrying out many tasks alone. As such these parents often do not have the free time or desire to spend hours grooming or walking a high maintenance dog thus the question has to be asked – are they suitable to be a dog host / carer?

It's also important to consider things from a dogs view: In a dog's mind a family is a pack unit and everyone in that family has a certain 'position' in the pack. In most families, one or both of the parents are considered the pack leaders and the dog is subordinate to them. But when small children are involved, it has been my experience that dogs almost always consider the children equal or lower in the pack hierarchy than they are, and this is where the problem arises.

Because the dog considers the child a subordinate, it may refuse to obey the child's commands or 'accidentally' bump into the child and knock her down. It may escalate to growling at the child when the child is near food or toys, or even baring his teeth and biting when the child approaches or tries to play with the dog.

A child over 7 however, has a far better command of language and is also physically larger.

Also,, when dogs bite adults it is usually out of fear and perhaps out of aggression. When dogs bite children it may also be from fear or aggression, but I feel that many times it is what I call 'warning bite.' The warning bite is usually to the face or hand and while traumatic for the child, is often not serious in a medical nature. However, the question needs to be asked that can a five year old understand a warning – whether it's a teeth bearing warning, a verbal warning or a bite? In my experience and also research has proved that in fact they cannot.

As such, despite any guidelines stipulated by a licence stating no children under 5, I will still not have carers on my team that have children under 7 at home.

... I am no dog or child psychologist or expert but have spent time reading about and listening to problems with children and dogs. I am happy for my name to be mentioned but this is all just my opinion!"

End