

An Overview of the Oyster Bay Animal Control & Adoption Center's Canine Behavioral and Adoptability Policy

To ensure the health, safety and welfare of residents, a nationally-recognized animal behaviorist was retained to develop a Canine Behavioral and Adoptability Policy for the Town of Oyster Bay's Animal Control & Adoption Center. This policy was developed over the course of a year after receiving significant input from residents, animal advocates and educated professionals in the world of animal behavior. It's important to note that no animal is euthanized for time or space.

As an animal control agency, the Town of Oyster Bay's Animal Control & Adoption Center has a legal and ethical responsibility to make safe placement decisions for both the animals and families that adopt pets. Each dog that arrives at the center is evaluated multiple times as an individual. The center gathers information about each dog from multiple sources, including *previous guardians, volunteers, a canine evaluator, staff, and more*). All dogs are given time when they enter the center to become accustomed to their new environment. The center's staff and the Certified Behavior Consultant and Trainer use positive-reinforcement based methods of relationship building and training, as well as provide enrichment opportunities in an effort to build confidence, increase positive associations with people, and build trust.

Unfortunately, some animals are highly-dangerous, aggressive and place people in extreme risk of attack. The Town's Certified Behavior Consultant ultimately makes the determination regarding whether or not aggression can be modifiable based on training efforts. The behaviors necessary for adoption reflect reasonable expectations for a family dog. This policy seeks to minimize the likelihood for aggressive and dangerous behaviors to be displayed in situations pet dogs commonly experience and by so doing acknowledge the importance of public and individual safety and of dog bite prevention. This policy also considers the quality of life for dogs that reside in a shelter or other care facility for an extended time. To ensure the safety of individuals, families and senior citizens, the Town of Oyster Bay's Animal Control & Adoption Center will NOT adopt out dogs with:

- a damaging bite history towards children or adults;
- no warning signs before they attempt to bite;

- history of severely injuring or killing another dog;
- consistent aggressive behavior toward their animal handler;
- offensive aggression towards humans (actively decreasing the distance between themselves and the person they are aggressing towards);
- a behavior of stalking children in a predatory manner;
- uninterrupted aggression towards other dogs; and/or
- poor bite inhibition (degree to which dog moderates tooth contact in the case of a bite).

Bites that are determined to be fluke bites are not considered aggression. Fluke bites occur during uncommon circumstances that are not likely to be repeated (i.e. while in acute physical pain, while with puppies during lactation, while under sedation, etc.).

Note: this **Behavioral & Adoptability Policy** was developed by the staff of Town of Oyster Bay's Animal Control & Adoption Center in consultation with Ms. Trish McMillan, MA, CDBC, CPDT-KA. Ms. McMillan is academically educated in the science of animal behavior and has decades of experience working with animal shelters, rescue groups, animal control agencies, individual pet owners whose dogs present with aggressive behavior problems.