

How To Survive A Dog Attack

2015-08-25 08:38:52 By Chris Black

Dogs are a man's best friend, that's one of the first thing they teach you when you're a child. Mark Twain used to say something like "the more people I meet, the more I like my dog". But, just like almost any other thing in life, dogs can be a benefit or a hazard.

After all, dogs are basically wild animals, recently domesticated and put to "good" use by mankind. Yet, deep inside, the wolf (their ancestor) is still trying to get out when there's a full moon in the sky.

Okay, maybe I'm being melodramatic, but it's a well-established fact that dogs are sometimes a threat even for their masters, [not to mention perfect strangers](#).

For example, according to a statistic from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (the CDC), in the US alone almost 5 million people annually are victims of dog attacks, from which 800,000 require medical attention and 20-30 die as a result from their dog-related injuries.

Yes, I know, there are laws prohibiting various things, like animal control laws, leash laws, control programs and what not, but since when did a law solve anything, except for creating a job for a bureaucrat? Dogs are still roaming free in the suburbs and sometimes on the city streets, not to mention remote rural areas. And if you're a regular jogger or a mailman, you've probably already had a few encounters of the third kind with man's best friend.

Generally speaking, dog attacks occur when people are jogging, walking, exercising their own dogs in the park or riding their bicycles in average neighborhoods, at the least expected moment and at the worst time possible.

Of course, we've all heard from dog owners that "Max would never do that". That phrase falls easily into "top 100 famous last words", at least that's how I see it. To some, dogs often seem unpredictable just like humans are. And even if a dog attack is not fatal, it's a very unpleasant life experience, to say the least, especially if the perpetrator is a large Chewbacca-style dog.

And since dog attacks do happen in real life (don't get me started with the collapse of society and packs of genetically modified feral dogs hunting people after dark in the deserted cities of a dystopian future), it would be a good idea to know a few things about how to survive in a hairy situation, don't you think?

There's a reason why the police use K9 units: they're very efficient as attack dogs, and I know a few stories about perpetrators that made an instant 180 turn and ran like hell when they were confronted with a pissed-off [German Shepherd](#) with its fangs bared. Now picture yourself in that situation. It's not a pretty picture, is it?



To begin with, you should know your “enemy”, i.e. the top-ten most aggressive/dangerous species of dogs: German Shepherds, Pit Bulls, Rottweilers, Doberman Pinschers, Akitas, Presa Canarios, hybrid wolves and mixed breeds.

Don't get me wrong, any kind of dog can be trained to be very friendly with people or they can be trained as an attack dog; don't take any dog for granted.

Also, regardless of its species, any dog can have a bad day (I have a friend whose nose was bitten off by his own dog!), or you may have a bad smell, or the wrong attitude etc.

This is just a friendly reminder of your “chances” when confronted with an aggressive dog: remember that Rottweilers, Pit Bulls and Presa Canarios especially have a bad rep. They've killed more people than any other species of dogs in the last 15 years. And many of these attacks were from the family's dog in their own house, with the victims being the kids.

The Gear that Will Keep You Safe

The first step to take care of in any survival situation is to be prepared for the respective scenario. In this case, always have a weapon on your person if you want to maximize your chances of survival when attacked by dogs.

Weapons may come handy if you're attacked by dogs, but they're priceless for when you're dealing with “friendly” fellow humans (the probability is way greater in the latter scenario. Muggings, murders and other [violent crimes](#) occur way more frequently than dog attacks).

You can use lots of things for self-defense against dogs and other predators, but one of the most

effective and “legal” methods is the classic pepper spray. Being a device designed to make an aggressor think twice before attacking you, it works great on dogs, as they have an acute sense of smell. There are also specially designed dog repellants in the form of pepper sprays that you can buy specifically.

Also, do you know that old saying “speak softly and carry a big stick”? It works on dogs too. I mean being calm and having a big stick (concealed would be awesome) on your person would be a great defense against a dog attack. Dogs sense fear and if you’re obviously scared, they’re more likely to attack.

Guns are great for obvious reasons (the bang! Is usually enough to scare an attacking dog or human), even knives are useful if a STFH situation with a big dog occurs; I mean if it gets “mano a mano”. We’ll get back to that in a second.

Prevention is the Best Weapon

Now that we’ve established that it’s good to be prepared (with gear) for the eventuality of a dog attack, let’s see how to avoid a possible confrontation in the first place, shall we?

Diplomacy saves lives; Winston Churchill said that, if memory serves, before he began bombing German cities. If you see an unleashed pooch across the street, try to avoid it as much as possible, but let him know that you’re there. I mean you can talk to yourself, whistle a little, anything that lets him know you exist. If you take him by surprise, he may get irritable.

Try to avoid a strange dog’s territory as much as possible; dogs are territorial animals and generally they attack for two main reasons: defensive (war for territory!) or offensive (they feel threatened or they associate you with prey).

More importantly, dogs running in packs are way more dangerous than solitary ones, which are usually minding their own business. The worst idea when a dog is attacking you is to run away. If you act in that way, the dog will associate you with prey and it will hunt you down. And dogs run faster than humans, so if you don’t climb a car or a tree, you’re toast!

Also, try not to appear threatening to a dog which is showing signs of aggression (barking, growling, and hackles) by staring into its eyes. If you do that, the dog will think that you’re challenging it to a fight or the like. In the dog world, direct eye contact is highly confrontational, along with bared teeth.

So, if you’re approached by a pooch signaling its bad intentions, you must stand still, don’t run away, try to stand up straight and look as big as possible, keep your mouth shut and your gaze level. Don’t look down, that’s a sign of weakness.

Don’t turn your back to the dog, keep calm and eventually try a few commands like “sit/stop/stay”; if they work, maybe the dog has an owner, which may be close, but don’t put your faith in it. You can use the confusion moment to get away or to think about your next steps, it can’t hurt trying if you have the opportunity.

Do not make sudden movements and don’t smile; try to keep the dog calm and thinking you’re not a threat; talk to it gently in a relaxing, soothing voice. Seriously, it sometimes works, if you can control yourself. Try to back away slowly if the dog shows that he lost his attitude, i.e. is starting to lose interest in you.

In most cases, if you're not dealing with a psycho-dog, these tricks will probably work and you'll prevent an attack; also, you'll have a nice story to tell to your friends.

What if Confrontation Can't Be Avoided?

However, if all Hell breaks loose, what are you going to do against an attacking dog?



Well, if you're physically fit and you have a solid pair of boots on, the very nature of a dog exposes it to a good ol' kick to the jaw or throat which, if followed by consistent, well placed kicks, will definitely discourage it from being a pest to innocent pedestrians.

That's pretty hardcore stuff to be honest, and if you're confronted with a Presa Canario, you can forget about it.

The common sense reaction to a vicious dog attack is to put a block between its teeth and your body if you can. Use something like a stick, a water bottle, a jacket wrapped around your arm or something similar. If you have a stick or a bottle, try to shovel it down the dog's throat.

Keep in mind that trying to pull your arm from a dog's mouth is generally a bad idea, as the dog will probably rip it apart and you'll end up with a nasty open wound. This is also the moment to try that pepper spray, so the biting dog would absorb the full brunt. If your arm is in the dog's mouth, the eyes are very vulnerable, hence the perfect target for a sneak-attack (you have an additional arm plus two legs to stomp it good!).

In this situation, all bets are off and it's time to get nasty.

You can also try to shove your arm down its throat, depending on the situation (if possible). If you have a knife or better, a gun, now it's the time to use them.

By all means, try not to end up on the ground fighting the dog, as it may expose your vulnerable parts

(your neck and other vital organs).

As my final words, remember that dogs can be intimidated, just like people. You can discourage anything from attacking you by superior willpower (I saw a cat chasing a croc once) and attitude. If you can raise your voice in rage and roar (I said ROAR) like you've never roared before, chances are that the dog will think you're a total lunatic and leave you be.

Don't try that trick on pit bulls though, I'm almost sure it won't work and you might end up provoking it more. Pitt bulls that have been trained to fight are a tad crazy in the head; the most dangerous dogs out there, in my opinion.

Yelling, kicking and waving your arms will usually get you out of most any dog-related mess, along with "evasive action" (jumping on cars for example).

I would strongly advise everybody to carry concealed, because you know, shit happens and it's better to be prepared than sorry.

If bitten by a dog, I would suggest a visit to the ER ASAP.

If you have other ideas or comments, I'd appreciate your input in the dedicated section below.

Interested in improving your safety? [CLICK HERE](#) to find out more!

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