



Reporter missed Barney's warning

Animal expert gives hints on dogs

By Jimmy Nesbitt
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Marlin Beck recently was watching a newscast of a White House reporter frolicking with President Bush's dog Barney when he turned to his wife Mary Ann and said, "That man is going to get bit."

Sure enough, when the reporter leaned down and placed his hand over the Scottish terrier's head, the dog snapped, biting the man's index finger.

"I was reading the dog," said Beck, president of the Evansville Animal Control and Education Commission.

The bite was captured on video and has been the topic of several news stories, many of which jokingly implied that Barney must have been in a foul mood.

But Beck, who began training dogs in 1961 after he was educated at a dog school in Germany, said the incident should be a lesson for people on how not to approach a dog.

"First, he invaded the dog's space," Beck said. "People always ask what's the best way to approach a dog. You don't. You let the dog approach you."

Second, the man faced the dog with his shoulders squared to the animal. That's another no-no, Beck said.

"By turning your body sideways, you can help that dog ... to relax," Beck said.

Before the bite, Barney flicked his tongue, looked down and turned away.

Beck said the reporter should have taken all those actions as warning signs.

"He reached over the dog as opposed to coming in low and slow," Beck said. "The biggest mistake he made is he failed to read what the dog was telling him."

"The animal is responding the only way it can as a dog," Beck said. "It's not a thinking act; it's a natural reflex. It's intention is not to do any harm. It really doesn't have a choice in the matter."



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