

## **Dogs and humans – two faces of the relationship**

### **Summary**

Studies in many countries have proven that the company of a dog has a positive influence on human relations as well on the emotional, mental and physiological status of human beings. Dog owners are generally healthier and more physically active, and therefore less often require professional medical assistance. However, several problems must be taken into consideration, the most serious being dog bites. Biting incidents have led to regulations ranging from mandatory use of a lead in public places to a ban on 'aggressive breeds', though studies on risk factors have not found these breeds to be most frequently involved in dog biting incidents. In Poland mixed breeds have been shown to be the most likely culprits, which may be attributed to their prevalence (65%) in the local population. The majority of incidents take place on the dog's territory. Studies analysing the age of victims have shown a higher percentage of adults (84%), primarily women (56%), whereas in the USA 60-70% of victims are children. The latter cases may be more dangerous due to the location of the bite. According to numerous authors, children are usually bitten during interactions with their families' or neighbours' dogs, so that regulations remain ineffective. Instead, proper socialization and training of dogs, together with educational programmes addressed to children and their guardians, seem to be the most effective preventive measures.

**KEY WORDS: dogs, public policy, aggression**