

## Behavior Decision Matrix

When deciding on a behavior, we need to not just look at the behavior but also the antecedent to the behavior, or what we will refer to as the “trigger”, how well defined or identifiable it is, how often of an occurrence it is, and how often will this trigger potentially occur again for this animal. Using the below table can help us create a **guideline** to our decision-making process. These are still to be viewed as guidelines and all final decisions are with behavioral review.

Behavior level is not always exclusive to bite levels, and the below should be used as a guideline. For example, a dog who only has a level 1 bite but pins someone to a wall at the same time may be considered excessive behavior instead of minor.

<b>Behavior Matrix</b>	Trigger Level 1 (Antecedent well defined, <b>avoidable</b> , rare occurrence incident)	Trigger Level 2 (Antecedent well-defined, may be avoidable)	Trigger Level 3 (Antecedent poorly defined, unidentifiable, and/or <b>unavoidable*</b> )
Minor <i>level 1 and 2 bites</i>			
Moderate <i>Level 3a bite</i>			
Excessive <i>Level 3b bites</i>			
Severe <i>Level 4-6 bites</i>			

### Trigger Level Examples:

**Level One:** One time incident highly unlikely to occur again, very specific event that is not a common occurrence in the shelter environment or everyday life.

**Level Two:** Avoidable in certain situations both within the shelter and within a home.

*Examples:*

*Being fearful and growled at a child during an adoption meet and greet = mark the dog as “adult only home” and only do introductions with adopters of 18 years of age.*

*Or resource guards only specific items such as rawhides or kongs = place 12+ year old children requirement on adoption home, inform adopters of behavior, inform staff of behavior and follow protocol.*

**Level Three:** Unavoidable triggers **OR** trigger that cannot be easily identified in the moment (not due to lack of information).

*Examples: Being touched, being introduced to adopters, walking by other dogs, men, resource guarding furniture, etc.*

\*If a dog has a bite record that we did not get a specific enough history on and we only know bite level, but not trigger level, the decision will be based off bite level and current behavior in the shelter\*

\*When there is lack of information, the benefit goes to the dog\*