

# When pets revert to the predators they are

**Kathy Hedberg/Lewiston Tribune**

People can fool themselves when they have one dog or a single cat into thinking the creature is really mostly human and shares the same thoughts, feelings and fealty to the Boston Red Sox as its owners - or, as advocates for non-humans prefer - its co-habitators.

In reality, there was a time when dogs and cats ate human beings. This was a long time ago, however, and for the most part we have moved on and now are very thick.

But the evolutionary gap is actually not as wide as we sometimes let ourselves believe. All you have to do to be reminded that humans and animals were never intended by God to share the couch and eat out of the same popcorn bowl is to buy a few more pets.

This happens when you have children around and they suddenly decide they want something besides the family dog or cat. Often it's a hamster. Guinea pigs are popular; parakeets come into play; and sometimes creatures more exotic than that, such as rabbits, pigs or snakes.

Suddenly the dog that showed no more aggression than hogging your side of the bed reverts back to his inner wolf and becomes a beast on the prowl.

The cat whose idea of exercise was to scratch the furniture develops into a slinking panther intent on getting the door to that little parakeet cage open and helping herself to a feathered snack.

This I know from experience. In my family we've always had dogs and cats, but when the kids were a certain age they experimented with these other creatures.

Although we kept them in what we believed to be secure cages in safe locations, our little Scotty dog somehow managed to breach the perimeter and ambush one unsuspecting rodent after another.

One day she ate three hamsters. We thought maybe she'd be sick, but they apparently had no more debilitating effect than kibble. It was shocking and gruesome, and my children were distraught when they discovered the carnage. All I could do was assure them that since the hamsters were small they'd probably gone down quick and didn't suffer.

It gets to be a real headache having all these pets around the house, but some adults will say it's a good way for children to learn responsibility and the realities of life and death.

Also sex.

As a farm girl, I understood what this last item was about, and I can assure you that if there's anything more certain to encourage abstinence in a youngster until a more appropriate age, it's watching cows and horses mate.

Troublesome as little critters can be, all kids go through that phase and it lasts until they grow up and go off to college. Then all that's left is Mom at home with a dog, two cats, a parakeet and five pregnant mice.

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