



Of course, they have the well-earned reputation of being man's best friend. Dogs help the blind, kids and elderly, do home security and dozens of other positive chores. However, they are animals, and in certain situations even the most docile dog can literally bite the hand that feeds him.

Recently a flight attendant was severely bitten by a passenger's service dog. She was helping a handicapped man into a seat, and by separating the dog from its master for just a moment, the attendant inadvertently caused the dog to panic and attack.

Your *travel4seniors.com* editor had a similar incident. One evening several months ago, I passed a woman walking a dog that was wearing a bright costume after being in a Halloween street parade. I put my hand out to pat the dog's paper hat. I immediately suffered a severe bite that required a dozen stitches in the hospital emergency room.

The basic mistake the flight attendant and I made was not realizing how nervous and upset the dogs were. They had been taken from quiet homes to very busy, confusing, noisy environments. Further, the traveling dog was placed on a crowded, loud, shaking airplane when it struck out in panic.

Bottom line: When traveling in parades, airports or aircraft, don't reach suddenly to pet a strange canine. Even those well-trained, docile comfort dogs can suddenly panic and instinctively attack.