

Behaviors and Signs of Anxiety and Fear in your Dog

Review the list below, and it may come as no surprise that many behaviors in dogs indicate anxiety or fear. These signs are often overlooked, yet repeated episodes of fear can cause your pet unnecessary stress and lower their quality of life. If you notice any of these behaviors occurring frequently, consult your veterinarian to identify the cause and learn strategies to reduce and prevent future episodes.

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- Turning the head or looking away to avoid eye contact
 - Vocalizing through barking
 - Nipping or biting
 - Rapid blinking or squinting
 - Staying close to or leaning on their owner for reassurance
 - Lowering the body or cowering
 - Passing stool from stress
 - Enlarged pupils
 - Leaking urine or showing submissive urination
 - Ears pinned back or flattened against the head
 - Sudden stillness or moving very slowly
 - Brow furrowing or wrinkling
 - Low growls
 - Hard, intense stare with pupils widened
 - Hiding
 - Jumping or startling easily at small changes, showing a heightened state of alertness
 - Repeated lip licking
 - Holding one paw lifted off the ground
 - Excessive drooling or salivation
 - Remaining on edge and scanning the environment constantly (hypervigilance)
 - Lip curling or tight/pursed mouth
 - Mouthing or nipping
 - Extended nails, pacing, or panting
 - Raised hackles (piloerection)
 - Stiff, forward stance or sudden running off
 - High-pitched vocalizing ("screaming")
 - Excessive self-grooming, shaking off, or shedding
 - Slow, hesitant movement
 - Snapping or fixed staring
 - Sniffing/distracted behavior
 - Sweaty paw pads
 - Tail tucked low
 - Frequent yawning
 - Restlessness—unable to settle for long
 - Wide eyes with visible whites (whale eye)
 - Changes in treat-taking: grabbing harder, being picky, or refusing even when hungry
 - Trembling or shaking
 - Turning away in a "C-shape" or averting the head
 - Whiskers pushed forward

