The canine LADDER of AGGRESSION

Dogs communicate their discomfort with a situation and a desire to end an interaction by using visual cues. These are depicted on this ladder of aggression. Recognizing the lower-rung gestures is important so a perceived stress or threat to a dog can be removed sooner.

BITES

SNAPS

GROWLS

STIFFENS, STARES

LIES DOWN, LEG UP

STANDS CROUCHED, TUCKS TAIL UNDER

CREEPS, EARS BACK

WALKS AWAY

TURNS BODY AWAY, SITS, PAWS

TURNS HEAD AWAY

BLINKS, YAWNS, LICKS NOSE

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Source: Shepherd K. Ladder of aggression. In: Horwitz D, Mills DS. BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Behavioural Medicine, 2nd ed. 2009.