

# Dog Behaviour and Training Handbook

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## Understanding Dog Behaviour

### What is a Behaviour?

Behaviour is a way in which an animal acts. Behaviour can be influenced by:

- Genetics
- Early learning experiences
- Environment

Behaviour is also based on consequence. A behaviour that has a positive response will result in the animal being **more likely** to repeat the behaviour. 'Positive response' can be a reward in the form of food or praise, but it may also be something you don't expect, like any kind of attention from you, including eye contact or verbal reprimand.

### Dog Body Language

All animals demonstrate body language. It is important that foster carers interpret an animal's body language and adjust the way they approach an animal to accommodate its emotional state. It is important to understand dog body language and what they are trying to tell you. Foster carers should consider the following dog body language:

- Posture
- Ears
- Eyes
- Hackles
- Lips/mouth
- Vocalising
- Tail

# DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



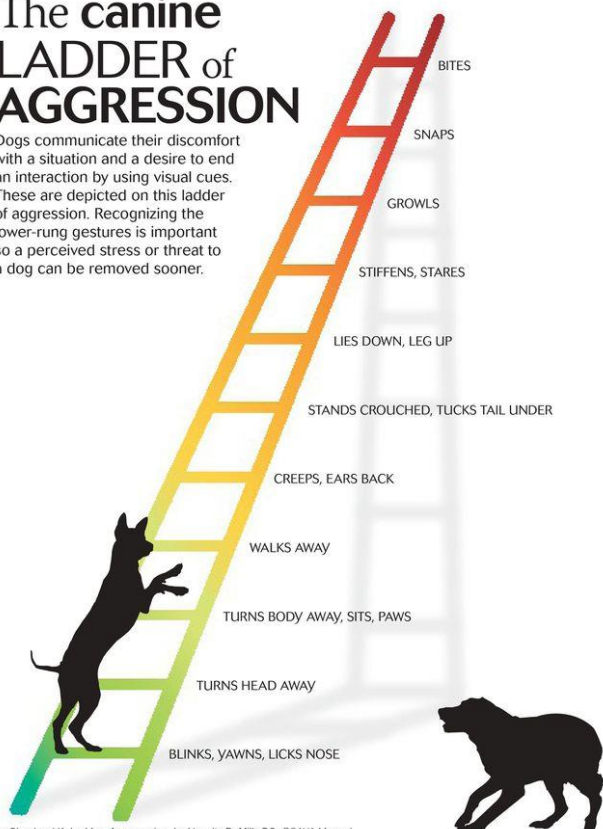
## Signs of Fear

- Distance seeking behaviour (requesting more space)
- Tongue flicking/licking
- Lip lift
- Turning away/avoiding eye contact
- Rolling on back (appeasement)
- Urinating
- Crouching down
- Tail tucked under
- Paw lifted
- “Whale eye” (whites of eyes exposed)
- Hiding
- Ears down
- Trembling

Note: fear can also lead to aggression in a dog if pushed beyond its comfort levels.

### 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.



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

**Signs of Aggression**

- Stiff body posture
- Direct visual contact
- Forward or defensive posture
- Erect tail (may wag very slowly)
- Retraction of lips/snarling
- Hair erect on back of neck
- Barking or lunging

Note: aggression can occur if earlier fear signs have not been noticed and acted upon. A dog showing signs of aggression is warning you away from them.

**Signs of Stress and Anxiety**

- Excessive salivation
- Excessive shedding
- Trembling
- Quiet growling
- Dilated pupils
- Yawning
- Pacing
- Destructive behaviour
- Hiding
- Lip licking
- Showing whites of the eye (“whale eye”)
- Backing away
- Not eating treats or food when previously would
- Fast, shallow breathing
- Vocalisations (eg. whining)
- Obsessive behaviour (eg. tail spinning, tail biting)

Dogs exhibiting these signs of stress or anxiety will need time and extra work to help them to come out of their shell. Foster carers should proceed extra slowly when working with dogs showing these signs.

**Signs of Confidence and Sociability**

- Relaxed body posture
- Soft eyes
- Ears forward and relaxed
- Tail wagging at a medium height
- Raised or erect head
- Approaching for more “information”

## Dog Training Basics

### House Training

This information focuses on puppies, but the basic concepts are the same for adult dogs that are new to your home or older pets that need to be re-trained. There are, however, two big differences between puppies and dogs. Firstly, adult dogs can hold their bladders for longer periods. Secondly, adult dogs may have prior learning that needs to be re-enforced.

If you follow a few simple steps and are diligent, house-training your puppy or adult dog can be an easy and stress-free process. Ideally, you should set up the following for your puppy:

- Puppy-proof outdoor yards that have room for toileting, play and sleep. You should be able to leave your puppy there unsupervised for short periods.
- A leash to be used when the puppy is inside with you or being toileted outside.
- A puppy-proof indoor pen where you can leave your puppy for short periods when you are unable to supervise.
- A crate if necessary.

All puppies have an instinct to keep their eating and sleeping places clean from toileting. Therefore, if you confine your puppy to a crate, you will be utilising this instinct to the best of your ability. Some puppies do not like to be confined initially and will need to be taught to be comfortable in a crate (see: Crate Training), so a puppy-proof pen with a small area of instant turf or fake grass is a suitable alternative. When toilet training puppies, always be ready to take your puppy out to toilet in the right spot.

Puppies have very small bladders, so you will need to give them the opportunity to go to the toilet every 2-3 hours (for very young puppies), even at night. Puppies are also more likely to toilet after a walk, feed or long play session, so you will need to be extra vigilant during these times and be ready to take your puppy out to the toilet at a moment's notice.

#### **Set that clock!**

When your puppy is inside with you, set a timer or clock for every hour. When the timer goes off, put your puppy on a leash and take it out to the designated toilet area. Don't play with your puppy otherwise it might get toilet time confused with play time. Just wander around and wait for it to go to the toilet. If this doesn't occur within five minutes, head back to your daily chores, but keep an eye out for any 'toilet like' behaviour (sniffing the ground, circling, etc). If you notice this, take your pup out to the designated toilet area and wait a couple of minutes for it to go to the toilet. Repeat this process until your puppy does go to the toilet. When it does, be sure to give it heavy praise, a treat and perhaps some play time with you. Put the puppy back in its confined play area and set the timer again.

#### **When you can't be there**

As much as we would like to, we can't spend every minute of the day watching our puppies and making sure they don't get into mischief. Setting up an indoor play area for your puppy means that you can go about your daily business without having to worry about the puppy getting under your feet or into something it shouldn't. Your puppy's indoor area will also limit the places where it can have an 'accident'. As your dog grows older and becomes more reliable, it can have more access to the house. Baby gates also work well as barriers.

Just remember, house rules still apply, so take your puppy out on an hourly basis for an opportunity to relieve itself. An outdoor area is good for when the puppy needs to be alone for longer periods.

## Add a cue!

If you take the time to toilet train your dog as a puppy, it can make things very easy and convenient throughout its entire life. Adding a cue to the behaviour of your puppy relieving itself is a handy tool. Think of those cold winter nights and trying to get your puppy to go to the toilet before bed. Wouldn't it be nice if they would just 'go' on command rather than waiting around for ages? What about those quick toilet stops on a long car ride?

While your puppy is relieving itself, repeat a command of your choice that will communicate to your dog that it is toilet time (eg. "toilet", "quick"). Give your dog lots of praise when it relieves itself. Initially, you should say the command once your puppy has started going to the toilet. As the puppy gets better, you should say it just before it relieves itself. Later on you should only need to say it when you let the puppy outside. Always remember to reward your puppy with treats and praise for doing the right thing.

## Knowing when to head outside

It's your responsibility to take your puppy outside when it might need to relieve itself. The quicker you become an expert at reading your puppy's signals, the faster it will become house-trained. It is likely that your puppy will need to relieve itself if it:

- Just woke up
- Was just let out of its "puppy-area"
- Just ate/drank
- Had been chewing on something for a while and got up to find something else to do
- Was excited, agitated or more active than usual
- Wandered away from an area it was playing in and started sniffing the floor
- Was sniffing the floor
- Was pacing or whining

And last but not least, the scent of urine is like a neon sign that says "toilet" to dogs. That's why it's so important to clean up accidents correctly. Use a commercial, enzymatic cleaner designed for neutralising odours.

## When accidents happen

No matter how diligent you are, the occasional mistake is inevitable. **NEVER** punish your dog for a mess it made, whether you saw it happen or not. **Do not rub its nose in the mess, hit it, yell at it or punish it.** The dog will not understand that you are upset at it for something it did in the past.

If you do catch your dog in the act, pick it up and take it outside immediately. Do this cheerfully and give the dog a treat and plenty of praise if it goes to the toilet outside.

Being harsh or punishing your dog for an accident will only teach it that it shouldn't relieve itself around you. This results in the very common problem of dogs sneaking off to relieve themselves away from their owners rather than going outside in their presence.

## Further difficulties

### Health



Often, when a house-trained dog suddenly starts having accidents in the house, an underlying health issue is usually the cause. If this is occurring, make sure that your dog has a full physical exam by a vet to rule out any possible health issues before exploring the potential behavioural causes.

### **Time spent cooped up**

Sometimes our pets can't 'hold on' for as long as we would like them to, especially if they are a younger or older dog. Make sure your dog has access to a toilet area or has regular toilet breaks if it is in a confined space.

### **Changes to a routine or lifestyle**

Dogs are creatures of habit and therefore, subtle changes to your dog's schedule can affect its toileting routine. Diet changes can cause problems with toileting due to an upset tummy during the change. You should always make sure diet changes are done gradually in order to minimise tummy upsets. Dogs can also be sensitive to specific ingredients, so make sure nothing new has been added to the dog's diet.

Environmental changes, such as a new house or even a change in the toileting surface (eg. from grass to concrete) can affect your dog's toileting routine. Simple things such as always being toileted off a lead and always doing it in the yard can also affect your dog's toileting habits. Putting toilet behaviour on cue can be a great help in dealing with these minor issues.

Household stress can affect your dog's house-training. Some things that may temporarily interrupt housetraining include moving house, marriage, the birth of a baby, divorce, illness or the death of a loved one.

### **Summary**

- Your puppy is reliably house-trained when it has not gone to the toilet for four consecutive weeks. Until then it must always be supervised out in the yard or indoors in its puppy-proof area.
- Teach your dog to be happy and entertained in a small area when you can't supervise it.
- Go outside with your dog and give it treats immediately after it goes to the toilet.
- Initiate toilet time by taking your dog outside - don't just wait for it to ask.
- Learn to read your dog's behavioural patterns. Pay attention to any signals that might mean it needs to relieve itself.
- Clean up accidents with enzymatic neutralisers, not household detergents.
- Gradually expand your dog's freedom in the house. Spend time in each room and feed, train and play in it.
- Feed on a regular schedule.
- Be patient. Remember that you're both doing your best. Forgive mistakes and work towards preventing them in the future.

If you are having ongoing issues with toileting, please refer to 'Toileting Issues' (below).

## **Teaching Your Dog to Recall**

As much as we would like to believe it, teaching your dog to come or 'recall' is not a pre-programmed response. While it is an instinct for a puppy not to venture too far from the pack, as the puppy gets older and more confident, the previously reliable recall quickly fades too.

Despite all of that, recall is one of the most important commands to teach a dog. It's not all about coming back when the dog's off the lead – it is more about getting your dog to focus on you and respond to you. This also makes for a positive relationship between you and your canine friend!

### **It's Disneyland out there!**

Getting a dog to focus on you on a walk is a difficult task. Imagine taking a child to Disneyland and then while attracted by all the interesting sights and sounds, you try to teach the child something new. You would be unlikely to be successful because of the many distractions that Disneyland would offer. It is much the same when you take your dog to the park where there are all kinds of interesting smells, sounds and sights that catch the dog's attention. In such a situation, trying to get him to concentrate on what you are trying to teach him, is often extremely difficult. For this reason, to get the best success with a recall, start in the home or garden, where there are minimal distractions. You want to build up the habit of focusing on you – so it becomes second-nature.

### **Make it worthwhile!**

First, work out your dog's motivations. Some dogs are very food-driven and will work for even dry kibble. Some dogs have a favourite toy. Some dogs may need higher stakes, especially when there are more interesting things around, for example little bits of sausage, chicken or cheese.

Set your dog (and you!) up for success. There is no point working on focus or recall with treats when your dog has just eaten! If your dog has a favourite toy item, try to make this 'special' for training sessions or walks, so he will be more likely to work for it.

### **Come means only good things happen**

To make a recall fast and reliable, your dog should only associate being called to you with good things. This means that you should **never** punish a dog when it comes back to you. Although it may be frustrating, **a recall should always be a positive thing** and your dog should always be rewarded for choosing to come back or focussing on you, even if it does take a while. Try to make coming back to you 'normal' - just call your dog's name (or use a certain word) throughout the day or randomly on walks. This way, the recall is of little consequence – your dog will enjoy the food and then return to whatever he is doing. If you need to get your dog to do something it doesn't like, for example clipping nails or bath and grooming, then it would be better to simply set everything up and then retrieve the dog, rather than calling them to you.

'Come' or the dog's name should also be spoken in a happy and cheerful voice. Using a higher pitched voice is more attractive to dogs and therefore more likely to respond to it.

When establishing a recall on walks, start by using a long-line (a lunge-line or an extra long lead will do) so that the leash is slack and the dog is effectively 'off-leash' but you still have control. Practise the recall in various situations and only progress to off-leash once you are 100% confident of your dog's recall ability.

### **Fun ways to achieve a reliable recall!**

While this may seem like a daunting task – teaching your dog to come when he is called can be fun for everyone in the family – most importantly the dog. Below are some suggestions which will help you achieve the best recall results.

#### **The name of the game**

Play a game with your dog so he makes an association with his name and food. Start around the house or in the backyard. As soon as your dog looks at you when he hears his name, reward him with a treat. Very soon you'll have a dog that when he hears his name his head will whip around to see where that treat is hiding! This can also be played on walks too when your dog is clipped to a leash.

#### **Catch me if you can**

This is a great one-person game to play. Drop a piece of food on the ground, make sure your dog sees it and is eating it, then run as fast as you can in the opposite direction. When your dog catches up to you, drop another treat on the ground and sprint off in the other direction. Soon, your dog won't want you out of his sight.

### **Piggy in the middle**

If you have several people in your family, playing this game with your dog can be loads of fun. Have everyone loaded with your dog's favourite treats and spread out. Then one by one, each person should call the dog and when he reaches a person he is rewarded with a treat. This game is a great way to mentally and physically stimulate your dog and is most effective if the people calling the dog avoid using distractions such as making noises and squeaking toys.

### **Hide and seek**

If you have two people, have someone hold your dog while you find a place to hide (remember to keep it easy for beginners). When you are ready, call your dog and wait until he finds you. When he does, make sure that you praise him and reward with a favourite treat.

### **What to do if it isn't going to plan when off-leash**

Despite all our efforts, your dog isn't always going to be a perfect angel and sometimes things will go wrong. You may find that your dog has found an irresistible good smell that he just can't leave. Remember, don't waste your breath calling his name, instead go towards him and clip him on his leash for the rest of the walk - practicing your name game the rest of the way home. Alternatively, run in the opposite direction, if it is safe to do so. The dog should always come to you – so moving away will encourage the dog to recall. Remember, even if it takes time, always reward your dog for coming back. There is also little point to calling a dog that is fully engrossed in something else.

It is important to remember that it is a privilege to have our dogs off leash. For this reason, and out of courtesy to others, **please only let your dog off leash if you have complete control, even he is friendly with all dogs and people.** Never assume other people or their dogs will be happy with your dog coming up to them. **Only let your dog off-leash in an approved area where it is safe to do so.**

## **Exercise and Enrichment**

Some dogs, especially working breeds, have a lot of energy and drive, but all dogs can become bored. Every dog needs some level of exercise, but dogs are intelligent creatures who like to problem-solve. At its worst, boredom can lead to many behavioural problems such as excessive barking, digging and destructive behaviour. Boredom can also contribute to more serious problems, such as separation anxiety and obsessive, compulsive behaviours.

It is important to provide BOTH physical and mental stimulation, especially for breeds which were bred to have a 'job'.

### **Physical Exercise**

Exercise should be at an appropriate level for the dog. Some dogs may be content with one daily walk, whereas others need multiple walks – especially breeds like Huskies and Collies.

Walks are important, but it is important that they are 'constructive' too. Being dragged around on a short leash for 40 minutes will likely just be frustrating and not as fulfilling as a 20 minute 'sniffari' on a loose leash. Walks should be an opportunity for your dog to explore the world and build a good relationship.

Try to keep walks to quieter areas, especially in the early days. Try to keep the leash loose and stay as relaxed as possible – don't rush the dog around and allow him to sniff at his pace as much as possible. This keeps walks relaxed and positive.

Take food on walks, and try to walk the dog when he is hungry (i.e. not straight after a meal). As you walk along, periodically call his name and reward him with a treat. This encourages your dog to focus on you. Some dogs are very food-motivated and will work for their normal kibble, whereas for some dogs you will need to 'up the ante' and use higher value food, like sausage, chicken, cheese or ham.

Playing games in the garden is a good way for your dog to exercise, and again builds your bond. Constructive toy play like fetch and 'find it' are great. Always swap one toy for another and encourage your dog to drop a toy before throwing another; avoid taking anything out of your dog's mouth, as this is confrontational and may encourage your dog to guard what is his.

### **Mental Enrichment**

Enrichment can really mean anything – it's whatever is stimulating for your dog and gets his brain working!

- Sniffing:
  - Go for a long, meandering walk dictated by your dog's nose. The time is his – don't rush him. Sniffing really calms dogs down and releases happy hormones.
  - Try different scents using essential oils or even natural scents, like herbs.
- Training sessions
  - Keep sessions short but positive – use whatever most motivates your dog (food, a favourite toy, praise). If your dog loses interest, then the session is too long or difficult.
  - Teach him something new! The obvious tricks are 'sit', 'drop', 'shake', 'high five', 'stay', but there are lots of others! You can teach a dog to touch your hand or an object (targeting), paw at an object or stand on a mark (freeshaping), speak, learn the names of objects, crawl on his belly or bow...the possibilities are endless!
- Food enrichment

Using food is a great tool for dogs who like their food. You can make enrichment items a 'treat' or, for high-drive dogs, use ALL of their daily food in the form of enrichment items. This is also great for dogs who like to inhale their food.

Remember to start easy and increase the difficulty. Dogs may need help working out how items work and may get frustrated if they don't understand – this will make them less likely to engage in the future.

- Scatter food on the floor (or in the garden) so the dog has to snuffle around.
- Hide food: under blankets, around the garden, etc.
- Put food in boxes or scrunch it into newspaper.
- Puzzle toys: there are loads on the market, or you can make your own using boxes or plastic bottles.
- Stuff food into a Kong, or smear a Kong with peanut butter, cream cheese or marmite (for the pros you can even freeze it).
- Long lasting chews like rawhides and antlers.
- Fill a shell pool with water (for dogs who like to swim) or sand (for dogs that like to dig). You can bury items in the sand – like food or favourite toys.
- Rotate toys and items so that the dog doesn't get bored.

People are always coming up with new and interesting enrichment ideas. Search online for inspiration, or get creative!

## **Crate Training**

Crate training is a new concept for many but is a very effective training tool for adult dogs and puppies. It may take a little time and effort to train your dog to use the crate, but it can prove useful in a variety of situations. For instance, if you have a new dog or puppy, a crate is a fantastic way of teaching it the boundaries of the house and keeping it safe. When you're travelling in the car, visiting the vet or any other time you may need to confine your dog (eg. after surgery or if it has been injured), it's much easier and safer if your dog has been trained to enjoy being in a crate.

### *How big should my crate be and what type should I get?*

A crate should be big enough for your dog to stand up, turn around and lie down. Crates can be plastic (used on airlines), wire (collapsible, metal pens) or collapsible fabric crates. It is not recommended to leave your dog for long periods in a fabric crate unless you are certain that your dog will be happy and calm inside it and will not scratch its way out.

### *I don't like the look of a crate! What will my dog think?*

A crate is intended to be a 'safe haven' or 'security blanket' for the dog. By nature, dogs like small, enclosed spaces, especially when they are feeling a little bit unsure. By providing your dog with an area where it can 'escape' and know it won't be bothered, it can readily seek out this area when it needs a bit of a break or time-out.

### *Training your dog to use the crate*

The duration of crate training varies from dog to dog. It will depend on the dog's age, temperament and past experiences. It is very important to remember that your crate should be associated only with something pleasant and training should always move at your dog's pace. Always vary the length of time that your dog will spend in its crate, especially during training. This will prevent your dog from 'expecting' to be let out at a particular time and reduce any issues such as whining or scratching at the crate door.

### *Introduce your dog to the crate*

Place the crate in a central part of the household (living room, TV room, etc). Make the crate inviting and comfortable for your dog. Usually, dogs will go over and investigate. When your dog goes near the crate, reward it by throwing a food treat into the crate or near its entrance. Repeat this every time the dog goes near the crate. If the dog settles down inside the crate, reward this behaviour either with your voice or with food rewards. You want the dog to view the crate as a wonderful place to be, full of goodies and fun. You don't want to shut the door of the crate just yet. Your dog needs to understand that it can come and go as it pleases, therefore reinforcing it as a good place to be.

### *Feed your dog in the crate*

Begin giving your dog its regular meals in the crate. Place the bowl inside the crate and encourage the dog to enter. If your dog readily enters the crate at dinner time, start asking it to go in and then place the food inside the crate.

As the dog becomes more comfortable eating in the crate, you can introduce closing the door. Start by closing the door as your dog eats its meal. Make sure you open it before the dog finishes its meal. As you progress, gradually leave the door closed for a few minutes at a time. Soon you should have a dog that will happily stay in its crate

after a meal. If the dog whines; ignore the behaviour and try to reward it or let it out as soon as it is quiet. Next time, make sure the dog is in the crate for a slightly longer period of time.

### *Increase the length of time spent in the crate*

Once your dog is happy in the crate for about 10 – 15 minutes after finishing its meal, you can start to confine it to the crate for longer periods. Get the dog into the crate using a command such as “crate” or “bed”. As the dog enters the crate, give it a treat, praise it and close the door. Quietly sit nearby for a few minutes and reward the dog for remaining calm and happy. You might even want to open the door and give the dog a rewarding treat-dispensing toy such as a Kong. Continue with your daily activities and return regularly to reward the dog, either verbally or with a food treat, for its calm behaviour inside the crate.

Start with short sessions and gradually increase the length of time that you leave the dog inside the crate. This may take several days or weeks.

### *Crating your dog at night*

Once your dog is happy spending time in its crate with you around, you can introduce it to crating at night. Make sure your dog has toys or treat-dispensing toys with it to initially settle it into the routine. Keep the crate in a familiar, central area so the dog feels comfortable and settled. With young puppies or older dogs you may need to take them out for toilet breaks during the night. By making the crate a ‘fun’ and enjoyable place to be, night time crating should be an easy transition.

### **Potential problems**

#### *Too much time in the crate*

Be careful that your puppy doesn't spend too much time in its crate. While it is a fantastic tool for toilet training puppies and preventing destruction, a dog of any age should not spend all day in a crate while you are at work and again when you go to bed. This can affect your dog's muscle development and condition. Young puppies shouldn't spend more than 2-3 hours in the crate without a toilet break as they cannot last that long without relieving themselves.

#### *Whining*

If your dog begins whining in its crate, the best thing to do is ignore it. For a young puppy, whining may occur because it needs to relieve itself, so quietly take it out to the toilet on a lead, making sure not to play with it. Place it back into its crate once it has gone to the toilet. Remember that any sort of interaction, positive or negative, will be a ‘reward’ to the dog, so ignoring the whining is best. However, make sure that you reward the dog appropriately when it has settled and is quiet. Using a towel or sheet to cover the crate if the whining persists can also help settle the dog.

By following these steps, you can train your dog to not only love its crate, but also see it as a safe haven. Your dog's crate can be a place to escape for a much-needed rest, a break from kids or other dogs, and even a portable home that will always be familiar no matter where you are.

## **Teaching Your Dog to Stay on its Mat**

By providing a mat for your dog, you give it an easily recognisable area where it can go if it is feeling uncomfortable or wants a rest. It also gives you a place to send the dog if you want it out from under your feet or away while you enjoy a meal. You can take the mat wherever you go, which makes it easier for the dog to behave appropriately outside the home.

### **Getting started**

- Start in an environment where the dog is calm and there are minimal distractions.

- Put the mat on the ground and place your dog's favourite treat or toy on top.
- If your dog puts at least one paw on the mat, mark the behaviour with a "yes", and give a treat.
- If the dog keeps its feet on the mat, mark the behaviour again and give the dog another treat.
- Repeat this step until your dog is quite comfortable with its feet on the mat.

## Settling down

- You want to get the dog to settle in a comfortable position that it will be able to maintain for extended periods - usually a 'drop' position.
- Lure the dog into a down position and mark the behaviour with "yes", followed with a treat.
- Continue to give the dog treats for maintaining the drop position.
- If it gets up, lure it back to the drop position and give the dog treats for staying on the mat.
- You are trying to teach the dog that good things will happen if it stays on the mat.
- It is best to repeat these steps in several short sessions.

## Staying on the mat

- When the dog is in a comfortable position, offer it a treat as you move around the mat.
- Move away and then come back and reward the dog.
- Gradually increase the distance each time you move away.
- You will need to make sure your dog is quite comfortable on the mat before you leave the room.
- Using enrichment items, such as Kong's, pig's ears or bones, will also encourage your dog to stay on its mat.
- Each time the dog receives a treat inside, it must first settle on its mat.
- If the dog moves off the mat, calmly ask it to get back on and reward it for doing so.
- You will be able to go about your daily business while your dog is busy enjoying its treat but remember to verbally praise your dog and try to return before it finishes the treat.

## Adding a cue

When you are confident that your dog understands how to use the mat, it is time to add a cue to the behaviour.

- Have some treats ready and cue the behaviour of getting on the mat with a word such as "mat".
- If the dog gets on the mat, mark the behaviour ("yes") and immediately reward it.
- Let the dog off the mat and try again.
- Initially, you should do this close to the mat so the dog understands what you are asking for.

## Getting off the mat

It is important that you let the dog know when it can move off the mat, otherwise it will become confused. Saying words such as "OK" or "off" will let the dog know when it can move off the mat.

## Teaching Your Dog That It's OK to Be Alone

Dogs are an integral part of family life. They spend most of their time with us in the home and join us on holidays and family outings. For this reason, many dogs find it difficult to be left alone for prolonged periods. They are so used to our company that they struggle to cope when we leave for work, school or shopping. Not knowing what to do, dogs often turn to vocalisation and destruction to relieve their stress.

There are things that you can do to help teach your dog that it's OK to be alone. These things can begin as soon as you bring your new dog home. As with most problems, prevention is better than cure. Following a few simple steps will help your dog be a happy, well-settled member of the family.

### **Create a safe place for your dog**

Dogs of all ages need to have their own 'safe haven' where they can escape to. This is usually in the form of a puppy pen (for very young dogs) or crate. Whenever you are unable to watch your dog for a brief period, put it in the crate. Make sure your dog will view the crate as a wonderful place to be. Fill it with treats, toys and other goodies. You can help your dog get used to the crate by letting it eat its dinner in there. Giving it something to chew on is also a good idea. If a crate is unsuitable for your dog, a mat or bed will make a great alternative.

The idea is to teach your dog that wonderful things happen when you are not there and that they do not need to follow you from room to room. This is also an effective tool for toilet training because dogs do not like to go to the toilet where they sleep.

### **Associate the place with good things**

As much as we love having our dogs with us, it is just as important to teach them that being away from us is great too. If you have taken some time off to care for your new dog or are on holidays, now is a great time to start doing this, as life will eventually return to normal and your dog will need to be able to cope on its own. Even if someone is home most of the time, teaching your dog to spend time on its own will greatly reduce the chances of vocalisation and destructive behaviour when you are not around.

You need to make sure that your dog won't associate being alone with stress and negative experiences. Try to make being alone a normal part of daily life. Settle your dog with a chew or Kong in the area he would normally be left in, then leave him to his own devices and go about your day. If he follows you then ignore him. This encourages the idea that it's OK and normal to be apart from you.

Keep special items like chews (or even your dog's meal if he is very foodie) for when he is alone. Try leaving him with these items, or hide goodies in the area for him to find. Leave him alone to enjoy them. At first keep these sessions short – for a few minutes – then increase the time. Make sure your dog has been exercised well and has had a chance to go to the toilet before leaving him for longer periods.

### **Our leaving home is no fanfare**

When you leave your dog, it is important that you do not make a celebration of your departure or return. You may find it hard, but it is in the best interest of the dog. If you get your dog too excited about your comings and goings, it will think they have something to be worried about.

When you get back, don't rush out and meet your dog straight away. Have a cup of coffee first, pack away the shopping or tidy up a bit before you go out to see your dog. Make your greetings very low-key.

If you find your dog 'panicking' when he senses you might be about to go out, it is time to desensitise him to this. Try picking up your keys, or putting on your coat, then chilling on the couch. This will teach him that these 'prompts' are nothing for him to worry about.

### **Other helpful tips**

There are things you can do while you are at home to help your dog settle when you leave. Regular exercise offers physical and mental stimulation for your dog and can help it settle while you are away, particularly exercise first



thing in the morning. This will get rid of your dog's excess energy and increase the likelihood of it sleeping while you are away.

Regular training in basic obedience or tricks can also help settle your dog. Like exercise, regular mental stimulation will provide your dog with an outlet for its energy, so it will be more tired and relaxed.

### **A word on food**

You may be wondering how on earth you are going to keep your dog at a healthy weight with all the food treats we suggested. We strongly recommend that you take these treats out of your dog's daily ration of food. A dog would prefer to receive its food in a variety of ways (hidden around the yard, inside toys, etc.), rather than in a bowl. A good rule of thumb is to portion your dog's daily food ration in a container. Fill the container with treats, dry food, bones, etc. If there is still food left at the end of the day, give it to the dog for dinner.

## **Specific Issues**

### **Boisterousness**

A boisterous dog has not yet learnt how to interact in a 'polite' way with people and can show over the top attention-seeking behaviours such as jumping up and mouthing. This is in part because he loves attention and is very excited about getting it, so he finds it difficult to act calmly, and in part due to some anxiety about interacting with people – which can drive more 'over the top' behaviours.

Teach the dog that these inappropriate behaviours get no reward and are therefore pointless. At the same time, reward the dog for showing desirable behaviours. It's essential that everybody interacting with the dog follows the same rules so it can learn, and ensure that everyone is aware of the following rules **AT ALL TIMES**.

To teach this dog how to interact appropriately you will need to be positive, patient and consistent with him. Every time you interact with him you are essentially rewarding the behaviour he is showing at the time, and you can use this to teach him about how to interact. He should learn this very quickly (within 2 weeks).

- Boisterous dogs tend to be excitable dogs. Try to interact with your dog calmly, using calm movements and tones. You don't want to 'hype him up' by being boisterous or excitable yourself.
- You will need to completely ignore any unwanted or inappropriate attention seeking behaviours (no touch, talk or eye contact). This will remove the reward for the attention seeking behaviour. Expect the dog to try harder for a little while and then give up. You need to be very consistent – if you give up after a while or when they try especially hard you will simply teach them to persist. If you can't ignore the behaviour make a distraction that does not involve direct attention (i.e. a noise in another room).
- Give the dog lots of positive attention whenever they show good/calm behaviours. This will teach them what they should be doing more of – and they will repeat these behaviours more and more in order to please you. You can also use treats to begin with to speed up this process.
- Give the dog lots of appropriate outlets for their energy – walks, enrichment feeding and training are all great ideas. Games such as tug, playing with toys or hide and seek with treats are also really good ways of using up some of this energy.
- Avoid any form of punishment or reprimand. This will only make the dog more anxious and therefore is likely to lead to a deterioration of their behaviour in the long term and may result in the development of other fear related behaviours such as aggression. In addition, for a dog like this, negative attention is still attention, so is still likely to reinforce his 'naughty' behaviours.

**GOLDEN RULE:** Totally ignore (NO TOUCH, TALK OR EYE CONTACT) inappropriate behaviours and instead reward the dog for showing appropriate behaviours. Expect the dog to try harder before giving up – don't give in as you will only teach them to try harder/persist. Never tell the dog off – this will reinforce its fear and is likely to make the behaviour more intense and may result in fear related behavioural issues.

## **Play Biting & Mouthing in Puppies**

Just as children like to explore the world with their hands, puppies like to explore the world with their mouths. Mouthing is a common and normal behaviour in most young puppies. Mouthing behaviour is rarely aggressive and not intended to cause harm. As puppies are usually highly motivated to exhibit this type of behaviour, attempts to suppress or stop it are unlikely to be successful unless you give your puppy an alternative behaviour.

Although often thought to be a teething behaviour; nipping, mouthing and biting in puppies is generally a form of social play and exploration. Teething is more likely to involve gnawing or chewing on household objects. If you are experiencing problems with teething, make sure your puppy has ample opportunity for play. Social play with people could involve chase and retrieve games, as well as walks and exercise relevant to your puppy's health requirements.

Although wrestling and tug-of-war games can be fun, they may lead to play that is too rough or unruly - and dogs don't know the difference between rope toys and your sleeve! Constructive games that encourage dogs to use their brain, like fetch and 'find-it' are more beneficial than games that rely on brute strength. Having said that, puppies do need an outlet for chewing and some dogs, especially certain breeds, do have a need to tug and shake. It is important that they have a safe, appropriate outlet for these behaviours.

Puppies need to learn bite inhibition. This is something they start to learn with their litter-mates and one reason why puppies stay with their parents until they're 7 - 8 weeks old. During this time, the puppies have had time to practice social skills with other dogs. Regular interactive social play periods with other dogs or puppies in the home or in the neighbourhood can therefore be beneficial to the development of your puppy.

### **Give them appropriate chew toys**

All puppies require toys and things to chew as they are exploring the world. Make sure that they have plenty of things to chew rather than chewing on inappropriate items. Items such as rawhides and Kongs are ideal. For teething puppies, rubber items that have been put in the freezer for a short time can give some relief to their gums. To get more wear out of the toys, use them on a rotational basis so the puppy has something new to chew. At the end of the day, this item is replaced with a new or different toy. This way, your puppy is only getting the same toy once every few days, rather than having the same ones all the time.

### **Re-direct the behaviour**

If your puppy likes to chew on your hands while you are playing, the first thing to do is to try and re-direct it onto something more appropriate to chew. If your puppy is chewing on your hand, have a toy or dog chew nearby; distract the dog with the toy and let it play with this toy instead. Remember to praise the puppy for doing so. Keep the petting sessions short, as the longer your puppy is petted, the more excited it is going to get and more likely it is to nip. To make this even more successful, remember to quietly praise your puppy every time you see the puppy chewing something appropriate. This will reinforce that chewing toys makes 'good' things happen and is something to be repeated. Providing your dog with plenty of acceptable chew toys will enable the puppy to appropriately exhibit this behaviour.

### **Bite inhibition**

Usually mouthing becomes a problem if the puppy hasn't learnt that humans have very soft, sensitive skin and don't appreciate being chewed. All dogs and puppies need to learn that human skin is very sensitive and the slightest pressure from their jaws causes pain. This is called bite inhibition. All dogs can bite, especially if provoked, so it is important that we teach the dogs to be gentle with their mouths. To have the best success it is also important that we teach our puppy this from an early age.

When puppies play with each other, if puppy (A) bites on puppy (B) too hard, puppy (B) will yelp. If that does not work, puppy (B) will get up and walk away. This tells puppy (A) that if it bites too hard the game will stop. Therefore, puppy (A) will learn that for the game to continue, it needs to be gentle.

We can do a similar version of this by teaching our puppy that nipping 'turns off' all attention and social interaction with you. As soon as you feel his teeth on your skin, yelp in a high-pitched voice and if necessary, stand up and walk away. This sends the message to the puppy that the bites are painful, and that biting will cause play to be terminated. Here we are acting like puppy (B) and ending the fun if your puppy gets too rough. When consistently administered this will often stop playful biting. For this to be completely effective, we need to be consistent and do this every time the puppy bites on our hands. Using this, in conjunction with re-directing the puppy onto something nicer will reduce the frequency of the puppy biting your hands.

### **What if yelling does not help?**

Remember that play biting is a component of play behaviour in puppies. Play is a form of social interaction. Realise that your puppy is trying to play with you even though the behaviour is rough. Remember that when the play gets too rough, immediately end the play session and leave. Social withdrawal can be a very powerful tool. Leave the puppy alone for around a minute before returning. If upon your return the wild playing begins, leave again. Although it is tempting to pick the puppy up and take it out of the room, this interaction may be interpreted by your puppy as additional play and the biting may continue as you carry the puppy to a confinement location.

Some puppies' arousal levels spike quicker than others, and some may be prone to being too rough. For those dogs that become mouthy on a regular basis, and that are more challenging, catching them before that behaviour develops is key. For example, identifying triggers, ensuring the dog is well exercised and has plenty of outlets for play, and establishing a routine. The behaviour team can assist in giving you more individual advice.

## **Resource Guarding**

It is quite normal for dogs to be protective over things they see as a valued resource, such as food, bones and other people. Often, this is the result of a previous experience which dictates to the dog that, if a person or other animal approaches it when it has these resources, they will be taken away. Naturally, the dog may become uneasy, as it does not want to lose this valued resource. This is why it is essential you don't regularly take items away from your dog or out of his mouth – all this teaches him is that he needs to guard what is his.

As pet owners, we also only tend to think about resource guarding if a dog growls or tries to bite us when we approach it near food. Even then, our simple solution is not to approach the dog when it is eating. As always, prevention is better than a cure. A dog doesn't even have to show resource guarding behaviours to benefit from the training. Ensuring that you spend some time teaching a puppy, or adult dog, the benefits of 'sharing' will provide you with a trustworthy and well-adjusted family pet. Short periods of training with any new dog or puppy before it even demonstrates guarding behaviour, will leave you with confidence at being able to interact with your dog(s) when they have a possession they would rather keep to themselves.

Possessive and protective behaviours usually stem from insecurity, and therefore, building up some trust and confidence in the dog, particularly around food or a valued item, will go far. We want to teach the dogs that having people around their valued possessions is nothing but 'good news' and is something to desire. No matter the age of your dog, we will be able to teach it to happily share its worldly possessions. However, as always, it is important that you carry out this training in a safe manner. If in doubt, or unsure, it is best to contact a behavioural trainer to assist you with the training process.

## Sit

Manners are always a great place to start. Usually, we ask our dogs to sit before something 'good' happens, such as a walk, coming inside or going outside, or perhaps even playing a game. This should also be the case at meal times.

To start improving your dog's food-bowl manners, first measure your dog's food into a separate bowl and place it out of reach, say on the kitchen bench for example. Ask your dog to sit and place its empty dinner bowl onto the ground. Without doubt, your dog will look at you with confusion written on its face, wondering where its dinner is. This is a positive step in the right direction. Rather than wanting us to 'get away' from its dinner bowl, the dog is instead inviting us over. Next, place a few pieces of kibble in the bowl. Once again, the dog will look up, perplexed and wondering if more is to come. Repeat this for the remainder of its dinner, varying how much food you are placing into the bowl, but be careful to only put handfuls in at a time. Already, the dog's perception of someone approaching its food bowl has changed – it is now asking us to come over to its dinner bowl to fill it with food.

## The food bowl

When we feed our dog from a bowl, we usually place the food down and then walk away. Sometimes, the only interaction that we have with our dog when it is eating is to take something desirable from it. A dog that consistently eats alone is more likely to resent intrusions to its meals later.

This time we are going to place about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of your dog's meal into its normal dinner bowl. In a separate bowl, place aside the equivalent of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your dog's meal in the form of something tasty, such as roast chicken or raw meat. Ask the dog to sit and place the food bowl down so it can eat. As the dog begins to eat its food, approach it and throw some chicken, or desired treat, into the food bowl and then move away again. The key is that we keep approaching and then backing away so that the dog learns that the approach of someone while they are eating can only mean good things, as food is always dispensed into their bowl. The level at which you approach your dog will depend on how comfortable it is with your approach. Ideally, what we are looking for is a dog that will wag its tail furiously as we approach with our treats, or a dog that stops eating and looks up at the approaching person to receive its treat (make sure you always place it in the bowl).

The steps that may be taken for this training technique are listed below. Before you move onto the next step, make sure that your dog is comfortable and happy or relaxed with the previous step. Remember that moving through these steps at a slow pace is often more beneficial for the dog:

- Approach bowl, toss in food, walk away
- Approach bowl, toss in food, wait a few seconds walk away
- Approach bowl, bend down, toss in food, walk away
- Approach bowl, pat back of dog, toss in food, walk away
- Approach bowl, bend down, tap bowl, toss in food, walk away
- Approach bowl, bend down, move bowl around, toss in food, walk away
- Approach bowl, bend down, pick up bowl, add tasty treats, give bowl back to dog

Remember that this is an excellent preventative to resource guarding. However, if at any stage you are uncomfortable, it is always best to seek professional assistance. These training techniques are all about making the dog feel more comfortable, not about pushing the boundaries.

## **It's no different for bones**

So what if the issue is with bones? The food bowl is still a good place to start, as it is of lower 'value' than the bones, therefore giving you a better chance at succeeding. Once your dog is loving people coming over to its dinner bowl, you should then repeat the process with something more valuable such as a pig's ear, and then later with raw bones. The most important thing to remember is to move at your dog's pace. Remember that we are not here to push the dog to growl or show aggression. This training is merely to make the dog feel more comfortable about people approaching it when it has a prized possession, whatever that may be.

## **Deliver food in a variety of ways**

If your dog is showing any form of food aggression, the best thing to do is to start delivering the food in different ways, such as in a variety of Kongs, treat balls, scattering food around the back yard or even feeding its dinner in different places each night. This is particularly important if your dog is starting to guard a particular area either from other people or other dogs. If we vary the delivery of their meals, when and where it is given, you can drastically reduce the guarding behaviour seen.

## **A word on toys**

Address the guarding of toys in the same way as with food, but rather than dropping some food into the dinner bowl, you would instead trade the toy for a piece of chicken or another toy. The game of 'catch me if you can' becomes fun for the dog when we show interest in the item. Whereas if we lose interest in the possession and act like what we have in our hands (food or another toy) is the most exciting thing in the world, as well as trading the treasured item for a tasty morsel of food, it will decrease the value of what the dog already has in its mouth. The dog will also be less likely to run away and chew the item, but rather bring it to you for a 'trade'.

## **What if there is more than one dog?**

Dealing with resource guarding between dogs is a little more difficult. The key is to keep them separated at all times when you cannot supervise them around food. However, dealing with this in a similar way as with people, is a great way to teach the dogs to share. By saying their names and giving the respective dog a treat, you are teaching the dogs that 'good things' happen when the other dog is around. The aim of this training is to teach all dogs that 'good things' happen when other dogs are around them with food. Your way of approaching this will depend on the types of dogs you own and the behaviours demonstrated. If you are dealing with food aggression between dogs, professional help is always recommended.

As with any behaviour, prevention is always better than a cure. These exercises are an excellent way of preventing or dealing with mild resource guarding behaviours. If you are concerned about the behaviours your dog is demonstrating, it is always best to seek professional assistance.

## **Toileting Issues**

There are several different causes of house-soiling, including a number of medical problems. It is important to identify the cause of the problem to develop a successful treatment plan. House-soiling may result from:

- Ineffective house-training
- Territorial marking

- Anxiety
- Fear, excitement and extreme submission
- Eating and drinking disorders
- Inappropriate diet
- Disease (e.g. Urinary Tract Infections, Incontinence, Gastro-intestinal disease)
- Early experience – puppies raised in cages until 3-5mths of age, and not allowed to eliminate outside, can be very difficult to house-train.

## 1. Work out 'why'

- Talk to your veterinarian and eliminate medical problems as a cause of your dog's house-soiling.
- Your dog must have normal faeces (not loose or excessive), and urination should be normal in amount and frequency to successfully house-train her. If there are any issues in this area you should again consult with your veterinarian.
- Work out when the dog is soiling – is it in your presence? When you are not there? Frequently or infrequently? This will help you figure out the root cause of the issue, as the way to tackle it may differ depending on the cause.
  - If your dog is toileting when you are not home for long periods, it may be that they can't hold on that long.
  - If the dog is toileting when you are not home, even for short periods, the cause is likely to be anxiety.
  - If your dog is toileting in front of you and frequently, it is likely scent-marking or is simply not housetrained.
  - If your dog is toileting when you are home and not looking, it may be scared of toileting in your presence and trying to hide it.
  - If your dog toilets when you approach her it is likely fearful elimination.

Bear in mind some dogs are not keen on going to the toilet when confined on lead or may have issues toileting on certain surfaces (some dogs prefer grass, for example).

Some breeds are more difficult to housetrain. Small dogs have small bladders and therefore housetraining them can be more challenging.

## 2. Start at the beginning

- Follow the basic housetraining advice, and make sure you are 100% consistent. Crate training can be beneficial (see: Crate Training).

## 3. Do NOT use punishment

Punishment such as rubbing the dog's nose in the urine/faeces or hitting her with the newspaper **do not work**. Dogs that look 'guilty' when they have soiled in the house have learnt that when you are present, and there is a mess on the floor, they are in trouble. They do not think that they put the mess there sometime previously, AND they do not associate being punished with something they did some time ago. They are simply afraid of you and may learn not to toilet in front of you, which will make your job even more difficult.

#### **4. Clean up soiled areas**

- The smell of urine or faeces can stimulate your dog to eliminate in this area again. Dogs have an amazing sense of smell and simply mopping up the mess is not going to eliminate the odour (from the dog's perspective). After cleaning the area with warm water, and blotting up excess moisture, spray the area with an odour neutralizer, or enzymatic cleaner, like Urine Off®. Ensure you apply sufficient product to contact all soiled areas. This may involve lifting up the carpet and spraying the underlay, or even the floor boards underneath.

## **Escaping**

A dog that is escaping is a major concern for a pet owner. Not only can it be critical to your pet's wellbeing, it can also affect the public. If your dog is roaming freely, the consequences can be tragic as it is at significant risk of getting into a fight with another dog, being hit by a car, or becoming injured in numerous other ways.

Furthermore, you are liable for any damage your dog causes and may be fined under the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act. This specifically states that all dog owners must securely confine dogs to their property. This means that your yard must have a closed gate and an escape-proof fence that a dog cannot jump, go through or get under.

#### **How dogs escape fencing**

- Jumping over
- Digging under
- Climbing using the slats as a ladder
- Chewing through
- Learning to open a gate

Knowing how your dog escapes will help you make the appropriate changes to your yard. However, until you understand why your dog is escaping, you may not be successful in resolving the problem.

#### **Recommendations for securing your yard**

##### **For dogs that like to climb or jump:**

- Add an extension to the fence that tilts inwards at a 45° angle toward the yard.
- Place clear plastic Perspex on the top third of the fence so your dog is unable to grip onto it when trying to climb.
- Note: Putting trellis at the top of the fence to make it taller is not recommended, as it will only give your dog something to grip onto.

##### **For dogs that like to dig:**

- Place large rocks along the fence line.
- Bury chicken wire at the base of your fence (with the sharp edge rolled inward). This should be buried about 3ft down into the ground, and 3ft back into the property to prevent dogs from digging it out.
- Lay chain-link fencing on the ground.

#### **Why dogs escape**

##### **Social isolation/frustration**

Your dog may be escaping because it is lonely or bored and is looking for interaction with other people or animals. It is important that dogs are provided with plenty of toys for entertainment and exercise to expend any pent-up energy. Highly active dog breeds (e.g. Border Collies) often need to be provided with things to keep them occupied to keep them happy.

**What you can do:**

- Keep your dog inside when you are unable to supervise it.
- Provide your dog with sufficient daily exercise (preferably in the morning before you leave for work).
- Ensure your dog has a range of toys to play with when you are not home and rotate them regularly.
- Partake in an obedience class with your dog, and practice daily what you have learned.
- Teach your dog a few commands or tricks and practice them daily for 5-10 minutes.
- Teach your dog to fetch a ball or Frisbee. This is a great way to exercise your pooch without putting in too much effort.
- If you're away for long hours of the day, consider taking your dog to a doggie day-care, or asking a friend or neighbour to walk your dog.

**Sexual roaming**

Dogs become sexually mature at approximately 6 months of age. It can be very difficult to prevent an undesexed dog from escaping, because it is motivated by a strong, natural drive to seek out a mate. Having your dog neutered or spayed decreases sexual roaming in many cases. The probability of an intact female escaping while on heat and falling pregnant is extremely high.

**Fears and phobias**

If your dog escapes when exposed to loud noises (e.g. thunderstorms, fireworks or construction sounds), it is highly likely that it is escaping due to fear.

**What you can do:**

- Leave your dog inside when it is likely to encounter the cause of the fear. Leaving the television or radio on may also help.
- Provide a 'safe place' for your dog. Observe where your dog goes when it is afraid and allow it access to that area. You could also create a similar space for your dog to use when the fear stimulus is present, such as a crate.
- Identify the frightening stimulus and desensitise your dog to it.

**Separation anxiety**

If your dog displays behaviours that demonstrate a strong attachment to you, such as following you around from room to room or reacting anxiously when you leave, then it may be escaping due to separation anxiety.

**What you can do:**

Separation anxiety can be resolved using counter-conditioning and desensitisation techniques.

**Remember**

- Never punish your dog after it is already out of the yard. Punishing after the undesirable behaviour will not stop your dog escaping and will only make it afraid to come to you.
- Never punish your dog if the escaping is due to separation anxiety or fear, as this will only make your dog more afraid and exacerbate the problem.



- Do not chain up your dog. This is not only dangerous, but also does not provide your dog with sufficient opportunities to exercise and may increase anxiety levels.

## Muzzle Training

Muzzles are a management tool to prevent your dog from causing harm in situations where he may show aggression. **They do not address the cause of the aggression, and muzzles should therefore be used as a management strategy, whilst working through a behaviour modification plan.** They can also help to keep other dogs and people away, and in this way reduce the likelihood of your dog practicing aggression.

Muzzles are never a guarantee that your dog cannot injure another animal or person. Accidents happen, and muzzles can come off or get caught on objects. Always supervise him when he is wearing the muzzle.

Basket muzzles are preferred to the nylon muzzles that close the mouth. Dogs need to pant to regular their body temperature, and they can't do this if their mouth is held shut. Basket muzzles also allow your dog to drink whilst wearing the muzzle and for you to give treats to your dog.

### Helping your dog feel comfortable wearing a muzzle

The aim is to teach your dog that the muzzle is a 'food bowl' that they wear on their head (similar to a feed-bag for a horse). You want to teach your dog that the muzzle is associated with good things.

- Start by showing your dog the muzzle and when he sniffs it, give him a high value treat. Once he is relaxed touching the muzzle to get treats, start putting treats inside the muzzle and allowing him to eat out of the new 'food bowl'. **Do not try and put the muzzle on your dog.**
- Instead, allow him to voluntarily put his head in the muzzle, for treats. You can cup your hand under the muzzle to hold it, so that food like liver or chicken do not fall out, or smear peanut butter, cheese spread or liverwurst inside the muzzle. Once your dog is eagerly putting his head in the muzzle it's time to start doing up the neck strap.
- Ensure there are some good long-lasting treats at the end of the muzzle and whilst your dog is munching away, do up the neck strap. Immediately undo it. Repeat until your dog is comfortable with you clipping on the neck strap.
- Next leave the neck strap done up for a second or two, before releasing it. Ensure your dog is eating throughout this process and push extra treats through the holes at the front and sides of the muzzle.
- Gradually, leave the muzzle on for longer, but only at a rate that does not cause your dog to show signs of distress. Freezing canned food or liverwurst in the end of the muzzle can provide a long lasting 'popsicle' for your dog.
- The final step is to work with your dog whilst he is wearing the muzzle. Practice training exercises like sit, come and stay whilst he is wearing the muzzle. Give rewards by popping treats through the holes in the muzzle.

## Timidity and Fear Aggression

Seek a consultation with a suitably qualified Animal Behaviour specialist who can tailor a rehabilitation program for the dog. If the condition is left untreated, it can get worse with time. This would be injurious to the dog itself and to those in contact with them.

- Initially limit the exposure of the dog to any situations that they find distressing. For example, keep trips to a minimum, and limit the number of visitors to the house. In time this can be increased as the dog gains in confidence.

- Do not force the dog to interact. Wait for the dog to come up to people and reward them for doing so. One way to encourage this behaviour is to use treats. Throw a food treat close to the dog. Once the dog eats it, you can slowly throw the treats a little closer to the person, encouraging the dog to move closer. This must be done slowly. Avoid too much direct eye contact that may be frightening. Do not follow the dog if they retreat. Allow the dog a safe haven to withdraw to when scared.
- Teach the dog what calm behaviour is and reward the dog with high value treats and verbal praise, when they respond in a relaxed and positive way. Teach the dog an alternative, appropriate behaviour to the fear response in calm situations then start to desensitize the dog by introducing low level fear evoking things at a distance.
- If the dog is in no danger, or cannot harm itself, ignore them when they behave fearfully.
- This dog needs to be handled gently and quietly to build up their confidence.
- The possibility of a fear bite will always be present. Anyone interacting with the dog should be aware of this. They should act appropriately around the dog, given that we know that lots of normal situations are very frightening for them. This dog cannot be treated in the usual way but needs to be treated with respect for its circumstance.

## Fear

This information is intended to be used under the supervision of a behaviourist.

Fear is a combination of physical, emotional and psychological responses to a threatening stimulus or event, which in the wild would protect an animal from harm. Fear may become a maladaptive 'phobia' when the response is out of proportion to the threat.

Fearfulness can be inherited, and in this case can be resistant to change. However, with time, patience and the appropriate use of medication you may be able to modify your pet's response to specific fear inducing situations. Inherited fear responses may develop at any age and may be generalized or specific to certain senses (e.g. noise phobias).

Exposure to normal events in the world between 4-14 weeks of age is essential for normal development. Puppies kept in isolated environments and not exposed to other animals, people, children, handling, cars, trains etc, may be fearful throughout their lives. Again, the fear may be generalized or specific to certain situations.

Puppies that experience psychological trauma during a fear period (8-10 weeks, and in older dogs there is often a second period of several days to weeks somewhere between 6-18 months), can develop generalized or specific fears, that are persistent over their lifetime. Again, behaviour modification and medication can help reduce their fear.

Fears of specific situations or events can be learnt later in life. These fears are more easily treated using behaviour modification alone.

### Signs of Fear

- Running away and hiding
- Aggression when cornered and unable to escape
- Becoming stiff and immovable
- Clingy to people
- Tail tucked and ears held back

## **Treating Fear**

### **1. Systematic Desensitisation**

This involves gradually exposing the dog to the fear eliciting situation/event in a manner that does not cause the dog to experience fear. For example, playing a recording of a thunderstorm at low intensity and then gradually increasing the volume. If carried out correctly the dog learns that the noise is not associated with an aversive outcome and stops responding fearfully.

### **2. Counter-conditioning**

This technique establishes a positive emotional response with triggers that previously evoked a fearful response. For example, every time there is a clap of thunder the dog receives a high value treat. Over time the thunder predicts a treat (a good outcome) and thus a positive emotional response is established.

### **3. Medication**

For generalized fear, where fear inducing triggers are too many or unavoidable, drug therapy may be required. The dog is given a sufficient dose of an anti-anxiety medication to reduce its fear to various stimuli. Behaviour modification (as above) is then carried out, and once non-fearful responses are established and consolidated over time, the drug dose is gradually reduced, until the dog is eventually weaned off medication. If the dog starts becoming fearful during the weaning process, the dose should be increased again and the dog weaned more gradually.

## **Creating a Systematic Desensitisation Program**

This information is intended for use under the supervision of a behaviourist.

To desensitise properly you must be able to:

- Identify to the cause of the fear
- Reproduce the cause of the fear
- Control the intensity of the fear provoking stimulus
- Control exposure to the fear provoking stimulus (i.e. ensure it doesn't occur spontaneously or randomly)
- Identify a starting point where the animal is not afraid (e.g. still taking treats)
- If you cannot meet the above criteria you cannot successfully implement systematic desensitisation.

### **Step One: Understanding the stimulus/cause of the fear**

Determine the characteristics of the stimulus that cause the animal to feel fearful.

For example, a fear of noises may be influenced by the:

- Distance from the noise
- Pitch of the noise
- Loudness of the noise

For example, a fear of people may be influenced by:

- The size of the person
- What they are wearing (uniforms, hats, glasses etc)
- How they move (sudden movements of children, unfamiliar movements of disabled people)
- Colour of their skin

- Smell etc.

**Step Two: Determine a non-fearful staring point**

You need to find a situation where the fear inducing stimulus is present but the animal is not scared or anxious. You will need to identify non-fearful starting points for each of the characteristics in your list. The animal should look relaxed and still be taking treats at this point. You need to have a good understanding of the animal's body language and recognise early signs of stress, fear and anxiety.

For example, you may find that the animal is frightened of children less than one meter tall. The non-fearful starting point might therefore be children taller than one meter. Similarly, you may find that the animal is not fearful of people wearing clear glasses, but only if they wear sunglasses. A person with reading glasses is therefore a non-fearful starting point.

**Step Three: Implementing Your Systematic Desensitisation Program**

- The animal needs to be desensitised to each characteristic of the fear inducing stimulus separately (not simultaneously).
- Try to reduce or eliminate other characteristics of the stimulus, whilst one is gradually intensified. For example, if the animal is fearful of small children and people wearing glasses, start by desensitising to small children without glasses.
- Gradually increase the intensity (scariness) of one characteristic of the fear evoking stimulus. You should only increase the intensity of the stimulus at a rate that does not cause the animal to become anxious or fearful. (Again, a good understanding of the animal's body language is important).
- Repeat with other characteristics.

Consider a case where your dog fears children under one meter tall, and your dog's fear increases as the child gets closer. First, ask your dog to sit and give him/her a treat when a person slightly over one-meter walks into the room. Next have a one-meter person walk into the room and repeat the sit and treat. Continue working with smaller people until your dog is relaxed when small children walk into the room. If s/he shows anxiety (e.g. stops taking treats) stop at this level of intensity (this height person) and go back to a slightly taller person for several more trials before trying the smaller person again.

Once your dog is relaxed with small children walking into the room, you can start working on reducing the distance from the child. Have a small person walk into the room and take a step in the dog's direction. Reward your dog for relaxed behaviour. The child can again walk into the room, but this time take a step closer. If your dog shows fear or anxiety go back to only allowing the child to approach to a distance where your dog can remain relaxed. After several trials at this distance where your dog remains relaxed, have the child again take one small step closer on the next trial. You can do this first with children over one meter, then gradually smaller children.

**Why give treats?**

Imagine you feared spiders. We start with a toy spider over the other side of the room and I ask you to take a step towards the spider. Every time you take a step closer I give you one hundred dollars. You are likely to make quicker progress and show more motivation to overcome your fear this way, then if I simply ask you to walk towards the spider.

**Helpful Hints**

- Longer desensitisation sessions are better
- The smaller the steps the faster the progress

- Think about how you are about to increase the intensity of the stimulus and decrease it by half.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Implementing systematic desensitisation inconsistently or too rapidly can cause the problem to worsen.

**Systematic Desensitisation for Noise Phobias**

The easiest way to reproduce noise is using a recording. CD's of thunderstorms and fireworks are available on-line. Implement the systematic desensitization program in the 'off season', when it is less likely that storms/fireworks will occur.

- Initially, play the recording at full intensity to determine if it scares your dog. Some dogs can tell the difference between a recording and the real thing. If the recording does not frighten your dog, it will not be useful for systematic desensitization.
- Train your dog to do a down-stay on a mat that you only bring out for these exercises. Do this without playing the recording.
- Have your dog in a down stay on the mat and start the recording at a very low volume.
- Reward your dog for remaining relaxed. Gradually increase the volume, but only at a rate that does not cause anxiety for your dog. Continue to reward relaxed behaviour.
- If your dog shows fear you have progressed too quickly. Distract your dog, give him/her a command and reward. Then end the session. Next time start at a lower volume and increase it more slowly.
- Make sessions as long as practical. Longer sessions get the best results. Start each new session at a lower volume than you finished at in the last session. The smaller the steps you make in increasing the volume the faster progress you will make.

Sometimes dogs start to show anxiety in response when other events associated with the noise. For example, some dogs with storm phobias develop fears of wind, rain, darkening skies, or changes in barometric pressure. It may be necessary to desensitize your dog to these cues as well. These can be difficult to reproduce and control. Ideally, you would desensitize to each cue separately and then in combination.

**Fireworks and Thunderstorms**

The loud noises associated with summer thunderstorm season is one of the most prevalent phobias in animals and result in tens of thousands of them demonstrating destructive behaviour, escaping from their properties and injuring themselves.

**Quick tips**

The following information is appropriate for domestic pets, especially cats and dogs but may be useful for other domestic animals too. Horses can also become extremely anxious by loud noises and attempt to escape - we recommend you consult your equine vet for advice on preparing your horses.

- Do not punish your pet for exhibiting his behaviour during times of stress.
- Attempt to engage, distract and reassure your pet that everything is OK, but don't 'force' this if it becomes particularly distressed.
- Provide access to a safe area where your pet may feel more at ease. Animals usually indicate their preferences such as under a bed or inside a wardrobe. Allow it to go where it wants to feel safe. Close bird cages, rabbit hutches and other fixed enclosures and ensure the pet door and windows are closed and locked.

- Make sure that your boundary fences and gates are secure and that your pet cannot readily escape through them or over them.
- Ensure that your pet wears identification, particularly a [microchip](#). In the unfortunate event that your pet should escape from your property, it will run blindly away without regard to where it is going. When it eventually calms down it will probably not know where it is or how to return. A microchip gives you the greatest chance that you and your pet will be reunited.
- If you know that your pet is extremely fearful of thunderstorms, consult your vet to see if he or she can prescribe medication that will calm it in known times of stress.

## Help your pet to deal with its fear one step at a time

Eliminating pet anxiety and phobia of loud noises will take time and a planned approach. It is not easy but through a combination of desensitisation, distraction, providing a comforting environment and where needed medication, you should be able to reduce your animal's anxiety and keep your pet safe.

### Preparation

Follow these tips to prepare your pet for the fireworks season.

- Ensure your pet's microchip details and council registration details are up-to-date and that your pet is wearing a collar/ID tag with your current phone number.
- Keep your pet in a secure indoor area during fireworks and thunderstorms - a laundry or garage is good if you have an outdoor pet. Alternatively, crate train your pet, then settle it in the crate for the duration of the fireworks.
- Create a hideout for your pet in a quiet room with as few windows as possible.
- Cover any windows in this room to further block out noise and to block out flashes of lightening or fireworks.
- Create a bed from blankets for burrowing and put an unwashed tracksuit or a similar item in the room so that the pet has your scent. Alternatively, prepare your pet's crate in a similar way.
- A few days or more before the fireworks, start taking your pet into the room/crate and giving it treats on the blankets so that it gets comfortable.
- If you are expecting fireworks, take your dog for a walk in the early afternoon to tire it out.
- Have food available in the room such as kongs, bones, treatballs and long-lasting treats. Extended chewing will help calm dogs and stimulation will distract them.
- Put on moderately loud music or a TV to muffle loud outside noises and to distract your pet. A small battery-operated radio maybe a safe way to incorporate noise for distraction into this room.
- Desensitising your pet to loud noises is a good option if you have time to invest and can do it in advance of fireworks.

### When owner is away

If you won't be home during the fireworks, make sure your pet will be safe.

- Lock your pet in the hideout/safe room or crate that you have prepared. This will minimise the chance of your pet injuring itself or escaping if it becomes distressed.
- Ensure there is plenty of water and some food in the room/crate.
- Take your dog to the toilet before locking it up, or if you have a cat, remember to put kitty litter in the room.

- Beware: if you are leaving the pet unattended in a room and it becomes anxious, it may behave erratically so ensure there are no dangerous items that the pet could chew on or knock. Cords and cabling and any breakables should be removed.
- Ensure the room is secure – pets can become very determined to escape when frightened.
- If you are planning to medicate your pet, ensure that you follow the dosage instructions exactly and medicate before anxiety sets in. Discuss your plans with your vet.
- Return home as quickly as possible to check on your pet and take it out to the toilet after the noises have subsided, keeping it on a leash when you do, just in case it's still upset or becomes spooked.
- Do not punish your pet for any damage/bad behaviour on your return. Being fearful is an emotional and instinctual response which an animal cannot control.

## When owner is at home

During fireworks or thunderstorms, the best thing you can do for your pet is provide it with a safe and comfortable environment and give it no further reason to be fearful. Having you there will help provide your pet with comfort and support.

- If you are medicating your pet, remember to do so before any anxiety sets in. Ensure you follow the dosage instructions that your vet has given you and work out a plan to get your pet to consume the medication in the most normal or least stressful way possible (such as hiding it in its dinner).
- Before the fireworks start, take your pet into the safe room and scatter some treats to keep it distracted and happy to be in the room. It's probably advisable to allow your pet to exit and enter this room freely if it is accustomed to roaming freely around the house.
- When the fireworks start, continue with normal activities and keep your voice in a typical tone. This will give your pet no reason to think that there may be something worrying or unusual about the situation.
- If your pet becomes anxious, do not change your behaviour or voice. Maintain normal behaviour with the pet.

## Dealing with your pet's anxiety

If your pet becomes extremely anxious around loud noises, you should immediately begin desensitisation training or visit your vet to discuss medication options. Anti-anxiety and sedative medication can help and your vet will be able to give you the correct dosage for your pet.

Contact your local council and check your local paper to find out where and when festivities, particularly fireworks in your local area are planned. Some councils permit fireworks at Christmas festivals in addition to New Years Eve so you may need to schedule your visit to the vet before Christmas.

## Desensitisation

- Gradually exposing your dog to loud noises may, in time, desensitise your dog to the fear it associates with loud noises.
- CDs of frightening noises are available from RSPCA veterinary clinics or you could find videos of fireworks on YouTube.
- Start playing the noises at a soft volume and after many times played over an extended period of time, gradually work up to a louder volume.
- While the loud noises are on, give your dog treats and play games with it so that it associates positive things with the loud noises.
- If your pet shows any fear or becomes distressed when listening to the CD, turn the volume right down, allow your pet's fear to dissipate then start the process again, progressing very slowly.

## Helping Your Dog Cope with Visits to the Vet

Unfortunately, most pets do not enjoy their visit to the vet. Veterinary clinics tend to induce stress in most animals because unpleasant experiences have occurred there in the past, or it is an unfamiliar environment. Dogs are more inclined to show aggression when they are uncertain or anxious, and can show one or more of the following symptoms:

- Inappropriate urinating, defecating or vomiting
- Yawning
- Tail tucked between legs
- Attempting to hide
- Excessive vocalisation, whining or panting
- Aggression

### Preparing for the visit

There are many ways you can prepare for a visit to the vet, and following these tips may assist in making it an enjoyable experience for you and your companion:

- Book your consultation for a quieter time of day, especially if your pet dislikes the vet.
- Take notes of your pet's symptoms and current medication details to assist the vet.
- Take your pet on short car trips to help it become accustomed to car rides and overcome fear.
- Try not to feed your pet before car rides as it may become sick.
- Use a carry cage for cats and a cargo barrier, travel harness or carry cage for dogs.
- Take an old blanket that your pet has slept on to calm it down throughout the trip.

### Visits with the Veterinarian

Use every examination or treatment visit to enhance your pet's enjoyment of going to the vet. Here are some tips to make it a positive experience:

- Always take your pet's favourite treats (unless it can't have anything to eat that day due to illness or the procedure that's scheduled to be performed).
- Remain calm and praise your pet for good, quiet and calm behaviour.
- Please advise your vet early in the consultation if your pet has a history of becoming stressed or reacting aggressively and let the vet know of any techniques to calm your pet down.
- Get your dog used to wearing a muzzle, just in case one is ever needed. If you associate the muzzle with treats, it won't have to be so stressful for your dog.

### After Your Visit

If you're not able to administer a particular drug/treatment, contact your vet to see if an alternative treatment can be trialled.

### Treatment Free Visits

Consider bringing your pet in for treatment free visits. Rehearsing the car ride and coming into the clinic for a treat from a vet nurse will help to reduce the negative association that your pet has with visiting the vet. Several treatment free visits during the first few months of owning your dog can be very valuable. After that, continue to do a treatment free visit every now and then to maintain the positive association.



## Getting Your Dog Used to the Car

Many dogs experience fear and anxiety when placed in a vehicle, as it's often the time that they have a trip to a stressful location (eg. the vet). Follow these tips to desensitise your pet to car travel, and only move to the next step when your dog is relaxed and content with progress.

Note: not feeding your dog its meal before working on each step can assist with the process.

### Stage One

- Arm yourself with treats and walk your dog around the car a few times with the doors open, allowing it to sniff wherever it likes.
- If your dog handles this well, give it plenty of treats and praise. If it is showing signs of anxiety, do not give any treats. Just continue to circle the car until it relaxes.
- Repeat as many times as necessary.

### Stage Two

- With all the doors open and the engine off, coax your dog through the doors of your vehicle.
- If your dog stresses out at the prospect of being put into a car, try the following methods:
  - Lure your dog into the vehicle with mouth-watering treats or a favourite fetch toy.
  - Have a favourite human sit in the car and call the dog.
  - Sit in the car yourself and wait until your dog is ready to enter on its own.
- Leave the doors of the car open and let your dog explore the vehicle.
- Continue to give treats while your dog remains in the vehicle.
- Repeat as many times as necessary.

### Stage Three

- Scatter tasty treats in the car.
- With the engine still off, close the car doors but leave the windows open.
- Calmly talk to your dog while petting it from either in the car or through the window.
- Continue rewarding your pet with treats if it remains calm but ignore any anxiety.
- Only leave your dog in the car for a few minutes at a time.
- Repeat as many times as necessary.

### Stage Four

- Repeat stage three, but this time turn the engine on with your dog inside.
- Do not leave the car or driveway, but simply sit there patting your dog and talking calmly to it.
- Repeat as many times as necessary.

### Stage Five

- Take your dog for a short drive around the block and then return home.
- Reward your dog's relaxed posture and ignore any drooling or shaking.
- Once you have returned home, lavishly reward your dog for a job well done.

### Stage Six

- Repeat stage five, however this time, take your dog somewhere fun like a dog park or the beach.
- Do this regularly for the rest of its life so it continues to associate delivery methods with the result.

## Introducing Your Dog to Your New Baby

The introduction of a new baby into a household can cause both known and unforeseen changes. Therefore, it is incredibly important to understand your pet's reaction to these changes and how to manage them. This information will help your family make a smooth transition, so your pet and baby can live happily together.

Although jealousy is not an entirely appropriate term when referring to pets, they can display attention-seeking and competitive behaviour when they feel their owner's attention has been displaced to another individual. Most problems arise from the anxiety caused by significant changes in the pet's environment, lifestyle and the ways in which it interacts with the family. Pets are also likely to have trouble adjusting if they have had previous unpleasant experiences with babies or children.

When preparing the family pet for the arrival of a new baby, you should ensure changes are gradual, so they do not overwhelm the pet. Here are some tips on how to make this exciting time as stress-free as possible for your furry friend.

### Before Birth

#### Schedules and routines

- If your pet's routine is going to change, it is best that this happens before the baby comes home. This way any changes will not be associated with the baby coming into the household.
- Get the pet into a schedule that is realistic and can be kept after the baby comes home and be sure to stick to it!
- Be sure to spend quality time with your pet each day. This will let your pet know that it is still important to you.
- Regular exercise program: make sure your pet gets its daily exercise.
- Some tips for exercising your pet pre-birth:
  - This is the perfect time to teach your dog to walk nicely and obey your commands, especially when crossing the road. That way you will be able to take the dog with you when you go for a walk with the baby.
  - If the dog pulls excessively, a head collar such as a Halti or Gentle Leader should reduce this tendency, but it must be fitted correctly.
  - You should provide your pet with regular activities that they can do when you are not there or when you are busy with the baby. These activities are known as environmental enrichment.

#### Getting to know the baby's space

- Let your pet explore the baby's sleeping and living areas so that it becomes familiar with the new smells that it finds interesting.
- If your pet tries to grab or drag any of the baby items, take the item away. Rather than trying to pull something out of the pet's mouth and risk turning it into a tug of war game, swap the item for a treat or one of your pet's toys.
- Do not let your pet sleep on the baby's furniture.
- Your pet's toys should not be similar to the baby's toys. Never mix the toys and never let the pet play with the baby's toys.
- Get your dog used to the new sounds associated with a baby in the house. You can play sounds of a baby crying at low volume, and gradually increase it, so that it becomes 'normal'.

### **Good behaviour**

- If your pet has any bad habits, spend this time teaching it good manners/habits. When the baby comes along, you will need to have a reliable pet that responds to basic verbal commands.
- Pets must learn that in order to receive favourable attention from you they must display good behaviour.
- The responsibility of training and rewarding the pet should be shared between all family members. That way the pet learns to behave appropriately in the presence of all family members. It is important to be consistent training so the pet understands exactly what is expected of it.
- There is a risk that inappropriately administered punishment-based training can lead to increased aggression. We recommend positive reinforcement-based training as it is a safer and much more effective way to train your pets.
- Behaviour training lessons may be required.
- Consider your pet's nature: You should carefully assess your pet's nature and behaviour to identify just how much of a risk it may pose to your new baby's health and safety.

### **After Birth**

Whilst in hospital, it is recommended that your pet continues to be cared for in your own home. This will:

- Limit the amount of stress on the pet
- Prevent the pet from being overly excitable on its return home
- Prevent the pet from having to return home to find a new baby there.

### **Coming Home**

This introductory advice is recommended for two adults. If your household only has one adult, we recommend you involve an adult friend or family member for the initial introduction at home.

### **Introduction**

- As soon as practicable, the mother should greet the pet in her normal fashion, as there is no doubt it will have missed her. Someone else should hold the baby while this takes place.
- Introductions to the baby should only begin when the pet is calm (this may take 15-30 minutes). Massage is a good way to calm your pet.
- When introducing a dog to the baby, one adult should securely hold the baby while another adult controls the dog. The dog should be on a lead or harness for the initial introduction.
- If you have multiple pets, they should be introduced to the baby individually.
- The adult handling the dog should offer the pet rewards for any good and calm behaviour that it shows.
- If your pet is fearful or too excited and you do not feel comfortable handling it when the infant is near, it is recommended that you contact a behavioural trainer who can help you develop the appropriate techniques to introduce the pet and child.
- Dogs should never be encouraged to lick infants or children's faces. Allowing this behaviour increases the potential for the transmission of disease.
- Try to stay calm and use a slow, quiet voice. If the pet reacts inappropriately, you have the lead in place to prevent it from doing anything detrimental. Use the lead to create more distance between the pet and the baby and try to settle the pet again.
- Make sure the pet associates the baby's presence with good things, such as patting and treats, rather than being ignored while all the attention is focused on the baby. Encourage and reward calm behaviour.

## Restraining your pet

Pets should be leashed or restrained in case they make any sudden movements. When pets are restrained, ensure that their reach (including extension of their neck and head) is at least one dog length away from the baby. This will also minimise any potential dangers caused by lunging.

### When there is only one adult in the house

- **Never leave your pet alone with the baby.** Curiosity can be just as dangerous as aggression. When you leave your child unattended, you need to put measures in place to physically remove your pets from the room/area in which the child is left.
- Cats tend to be more difficult. A self-closing fly wire screen on the door to the nursery can be a good idea if you are concerned.
- Make sure your cat doesn't sleep with the baby because it could accidentally smother it or see the active baby as an object of play or aggression.
- It is best to avoid potentially aggressive situations. Some dogs respond well to 'baby gates', others may need to be removed from the room.

### A Few Weeks Later

We recommend that the pet remains restrained in the presence of an infant for the first few weeks. If, after three weeks or so, the pet shows acceptable behaviour, it may be unleashed. However, pets must always be supervised in the presence of an infant.

Under no circumstances should a pet be able to sleep in a room with an unattended infant or young child. If your pet normally sleeps inside, then close the door of the baby's room and use a baby monitor. Even if you do not have a cat of your own, be cautious of your baby's safety both inside and outside your house as neighbourhood cats may also pose a threat.

### Potential hazards and problems identified

Pets can pose a number of hazards. Issues such as tripping, falling, jumping and crushing injuries are more common with infants and young children.

- No animal should be left alone with an infant for any reason. This is not because animals are innately aggressive but rather a baby/child cannot move an animal away if it cuddles up next to them for protection or warmth, which could result in smothering.
- Any child under 10 years of age should not be left to interact alone with pets.
- Predatory aggression is the most common form of aggression shown by dogs to very young infants.
- Aggression caused by fear or pain is frequently associated with older children (18-36 months) as these children are often unco-ordinated and inadvertently hurt the pet.
- Young children should be taught to treat pets gently – no pulling, tugging or pounding.
- Children should not be allowed to play with or touch the dog while it is eating, sleeping or resting. These are times when a child is more likely to get bitten.

### Do you have concerns about your pet?

- If you think your dog may be untrustworthy with a baby, for example, if it growls and bites/snaps at strangers or its family, you need to seriously consider whether you can safely manage your dog with a new baby.

- Re-housing the dog would be a far safer option, and possibly the best option if the amount of risk that you are prepared to take is zero.
- If you need to muzzle your dog you should seriously consider the risk that it poses to your baby – should you be keeping the dog in the household with a baby/child?
- Muzzles may prevent bite injuries but they do not prevent knocking, bruising and other injuries. They may also frustrate the dog to the point where greater damage is done if the opportunity does arise for the dog to attack the child. There is also the risk of the dog getting out of the muzzle.

## **Practise good hygiene when handling pets**

When caring for pets it is important to minimise both the onset and/or spread of disease to either the pet or other members of the family. Here's how:

- Maintain good worm and flea control measures.
- Practise good hygiene such as:
  - Hand washing
  - Regular pet washing/grooming
  - Clean environment and garden
  - Cover sandpits so cats can't get in
  - Wash all fruit and vegetables properly
  - Cook meat before serving
  - Wear shoes in a dog area
  - Use gloves for gardening
  - Use common sense

## **Summary**

- Preparing your pet will save a lot of anguish when the baby comes home.
- Before the baby is born, begin and maintain a routine that is practical and friendly to both baby and pet.
- Have fun with both your baby and pet and spend quality time with each.
- Use common sense to prevent any injuries to the child or pet.
- Reward favourable behaviour and be consistent.
- Practise good hygiene when handling pets.
- Never dangle a baby or child in front of a pet.
- Make sure the pet associates the baby with good things such as patting/massaging/treats, rather than being ignored.
- Talk to or visit your local vet if you need advice.

**Appendix A: Body Language of Fear in Dogs**

**Body Language of Fear in Dogs**



**Slight Cowering**



**Major Cowering**

**More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety**



**Licking Lips**  
when no food nearby



**Panting**  
when not hot or thirsty



**Brows Furrowed, Ears to Side**



**Moving in Slow Motion**  
walking slow on floor



**Acting Sleepy or Yawning**  
when they shouldn't be tired



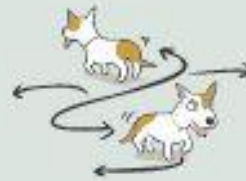
**Hypervigilant**  
looking in many directions



**Suddenly Won't Eat**  
but was hungry earlier



**Moving Away**



**Pacing**

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**Appendix B: The Engage – Disengage Game**

# THE ENGAGE-DISENGAGE GAME

A training game for dogs who are FEARFUL, ANXIOUS, or FRUSTRATED around a specific trigger such as another dog, person, or sound. The goal is to first decrease the dog's fear/anxiety/frustration and then to teach the dog a new safe and appropriate behavior to do instead.

- PREP:**
- High value treats
  - Clicker (or verbal marker)
  - Humane harness or collar
  - Practice fast u-turns by luring your dog with a treat on his nose, or tossing "find-it" treats on the ground as you both walk away quickly in the opposite direction.
  - Take a break if you see subtle stress signals (displacement behaviors) such as excessive lip licking, yawning, or scratching.



**PLAY FOR 1-5 MINUTES. TAKE A BREAK. REPEAT.**

## LEVEL 1: ENGAGE

- 1 Start at a safe distance away from the trigger, where your dog is not reacting. Be quiet and still so your dog notices the trigger on his own.
- 2 At the precise moment your dog ENGAGES by looking at the trigger, CLICK!
- 3 When your dog turns his head towards you after the click, feed a treat.  
*If your dog reacts or is not turning back to you after the click, move further away from the trigger to reset at an easier distance.*

**LEVEL 1 GOAL:**

To do at least 3-5 repetitions in a row at the same distance before moving on to LEVEL 2. A successful repetition is when your dog immediately turns back to you after the click.

If the trigger is moving or changing in intensity, keep playing LEVEL 1 until your dog has calmly looked at (or engaged with) the trigger from every direction. Then move on to LEVEL 2.

## LEVEL 2: DISENGAGE

- 1 Let your dog notice the trigger again, but now wait 1-5 seconds to see if he will offer to LOOK AWAY from the trigger on his own.  
*If your dog is fixating on the trigger for longer than 5 seconds, GO BACK to LEVEL 1.*
- 2 At the precise moment your dog DISENGAGES by looking away from the trigger, CLICK!
- 3 After the click, feed a treat.  
*If your dog reacts or is not turning back to you after the click, move further away from the trigger to reset at an easier distance.*

**LEVEL 2 GOAL:**

To do at least 3-5 repetitions in a row before moving 1-5 steps closer to the trigger. A successful repetition is when your dog comfortably disengages with the trigger on his own.

As you move closer, keep playing LEVEL 2 if the trigger is not moving or changing in intensity. If the trigger is moving or changing in intensity, go back to LEVEL 1 at the new distance.



Appendix C: Do's and Don't's of Dog Training

**The Do's and Don't's of Dog Training**

**DO's**



**DO** use rewards like treats to train your dog so your dog will enjoy training.



**DO** use comfortable, dog friendly equipment so that your dog feels relaxed and happy.



**DO** have your dog work for valued resources like meals, walks and toys so your dog looks to you for guidance.



**DO** build a cooperative relationship based on mutual respect, communication and trust so both you and your dog enjoy being with one another.

**DON'T's**



**DON'T** use force or punishment when working with your dog or your dog will not think training is fun and will be afraid of you.



**DON'T** use aversive equipment like choke collars, prong collars or shock collars or training will be painful and scary for your dog.



**DON'T** use confrontational methods that may frighten your dog or worse, cause your dog to react aggressively.



**DON'T** use methods or equipment that are uncomfortable, painful, forceful, scary or intimidating to your dog. Positive reinforcement training is so much more fun for both the dog and owner.



**EAST BAY DOG TRAINERS**

[www.eastbaydogtrainers.org](http://www.eastbaydogtrainers.org)

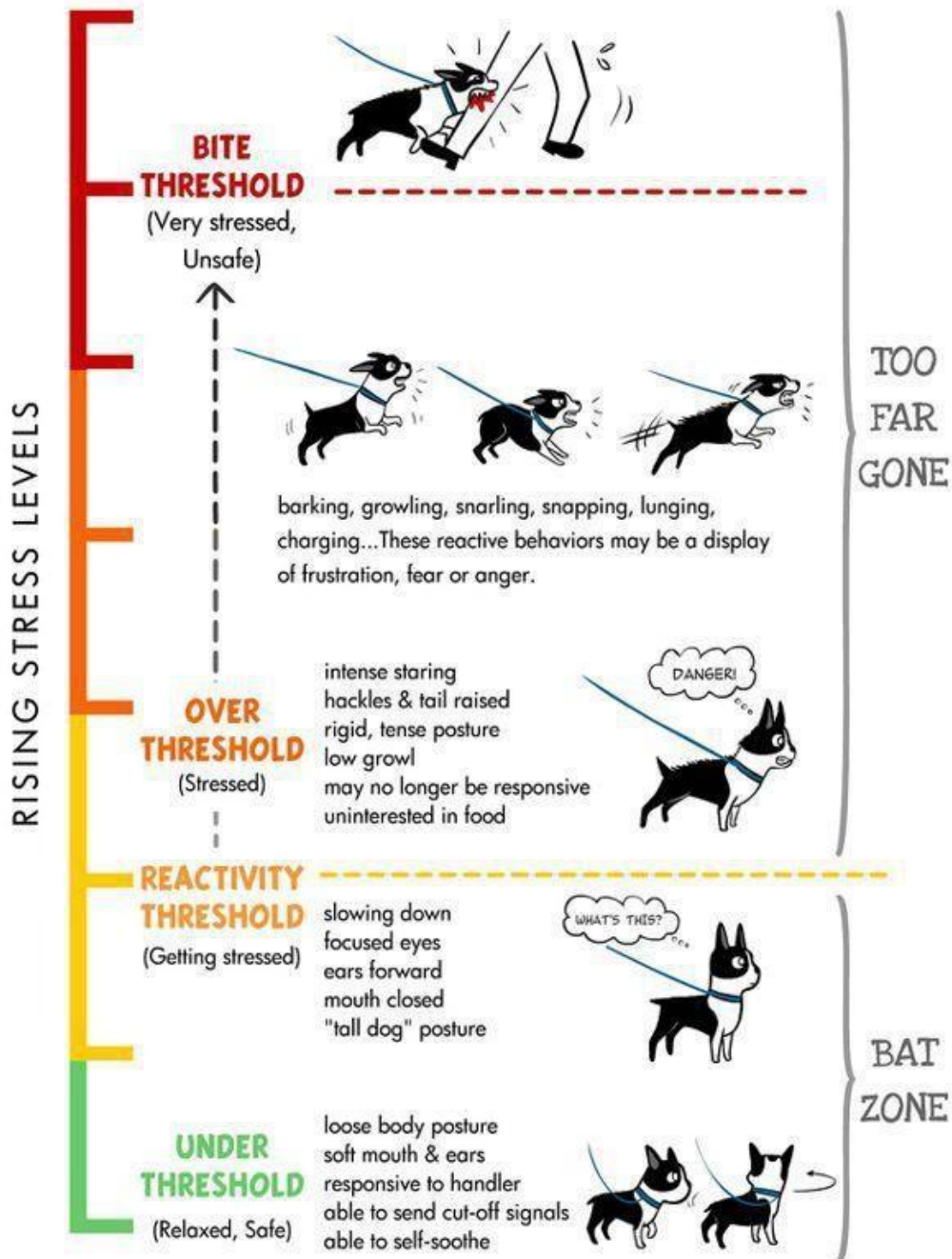
illustrated by Lili Chin | doggiedrawings.net



Appendix D: Dog Reactivity Chart

# REACTIVITY CHART

WHEN DOG ENCOUNTERS A TRIGGER



Appendix E: Dog Calming Signals

**CALMING SIGNALS**



ALERT



SCARED



"PLEASE..."



"PEACE!"



"PEACE!"



"PEACE!"



I'LL BE NO THREAT



I'LL BE NO THREAT



I'LL BE NO THREAT



BEING FRIENDLY



LET'S PLAY!



SUBMISSION



CUTE HARMLESS PUPPY

*Lili*

**Appendix F: How Kids Should Interact with Dogs**

**How Kids SHOULD Interact with Dogs**

Use common sense.

Be polite and kind to pets



Learn to recognize when your dog is scared or anxious



Play appropriate games with pets, such as:

Fetch



ROLL OVER



Training tricks (like roll over, shake, beg, etc.)

Walking and running with a dog



SNIFF SNIFF



Playing hide-n-seek

Always remember:

**Supervise all interactions. Accidents can happen in a split second.**



Train your dog to associate the kids with positive experiences so he'll be more likely to tolerate your child in case she accidentally interacts inappropriately.



**Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS**

*The Art and Science of Animal Behavior*

For additional free dog bite prevention resources and more dog behavior books and products, visit [www.drSophiaYin.com](http://www.drSophiaYin.com).



**Appendix G: Facial Expressions of Stress in Dogs**

# Facial Expressions of STRESS



LOOKING AWAY



WHALE EYE



CLOWN MOUTH



BROW FURROWED



EARS ALERT



EARS BACK/FLATTENED



EARS SIDeways



GRINNING



CHEEK PUFFING,  
TEETH CHATTERING



SQUINTING,  
BLINKING

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**Appendix H: Physiological Signs of Stress in Dogs**

## Physiological Signs of STRESS



**PANTING**



**PUPILS DILATED**



**SHEDDING**



**URINATION/  
DEFECATION**



**HYPERSALIVATION**



**NOT TAKING  
TREATS**



**TENSE MUSCLES**



**LIPSTICK SHOWING**



**GRIMACE**



**SWEATY PAWS**



**VOMITING**



**RED SCLERA**

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**Appendix I: Severe Signs of Stress in Dogs**

## Severe Stress Signs in Dogs

FIGHT	FREEZE	FLIGHT
 <b>BARKING</b>	 <b>MOVING IN SLOW MOTION</b>	 <b>RUNNING AWAY</b>
 <b>BARE TEETH</b>	 <b>FROZEN</b>	 <b>HIDING</b>
 <b>HACKLES</b>	 <b>DUCKING BEHIND LEGS</b>	
 <b>LIP LIFT</b>	 <b>STARTLES EASILY</b>	

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## References

Document	Reference description
The Art and Science of Dog Behaviour	Dr Sophia Yin – The Art and Science of Dog Behaviour

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