

Dog Behavior

The dog's behavior stems from its wild counterpart, the wolf. Wolves live in packs and follow a leader. Pet dogs enjoy the companionship of their human family and look to their owner as their leader. For this reason, it is important that you are a good leader and provide routine exercise and training, a balanced diet, grooming and medical care to keep your dog happy and healthy.

As in the wild, dogs can occasionally show protective and dominant behavior. This is most often seen when dogs try to protect their home from strange animals and people. Some dogs try to show dominance over family members. To prevent this, it is important to have good training from a young age.

You must be able to read your dog's body language so you know when to give your pet time alone.

The dog's body position, tail, ears and eyes can tell us a lot about its mood. It's important to know that a wagging tail doesn't always mean that the dog is friendly. So never use the tail as the only method of reading a dog's body language.

Relaxed dog:

- * Relaxed tail usually down or wagging upward
- * Relaxed ears
- * Relaxed mouth
- * Relaxed head

Playful dog:

- * Forward and relaxed ears
- * Eyes wide open and happy
- * Relaxed mouth
- * Excited panting
- * Front end of body lowered
- * Wiggling back end with wagging tail

Scared dog:

- * Hairs on the back may stand up
- * Tail curled under
- * Wrinkled nose
- * Closed mouth
- * Avoid eye contact
- * Curling lip

Angry dog:

- * Stiff tail
- * Hairs on the back may stand up
- * Head forward
- * Wrinkled nose
- * Growling
- * Leaning forward
- * Curling lip

Dogs have many different sounds that can help us understand what they are feeling – bark, growl, howl, whimper. Barking can occur in threatening situations or can alert us to something. Growling is a part of aggressive behavior. Howling is a form of long-range communication that dogs use to locate other dogs. Whimpers and whines can indicate that they want something like food, a walk or to go outside. It can also be a sign that your dog is in pain.

Understanding your dog's behavior not only helps you to bond and communicate with your pet, but also helps you to pick up any early signs of illness. Here are some indicators that your pet may be sick:

- * Quieter than usual
- * Not interested in play or exercise
- * Eating more or less
- * Drinking more or less
- * Changes in toilets
- * Vomiting