

Your dog, the predator

■ BY HARRY KALAJIAN

All dogs are predators, and as predators they are always ready to give chase and capture instinctively. It's the natural prey drive in them. But our pet dogs do not use their prey drive for survival purposes. It's more for the game of it. Still, they sometimes can kill the prey. Feral dogs, on the other hand, will give chase to catch for survival purposes. The dog's natural predatory instincts of chase and catch are already in their genes. Some dogs have a

very strong prey drive, while others not so much

The dog's predatory instincts become elevated by a prey's movements, which in turn is what catches the dog's attention. Prey drive is very important as the basis for many different types of training. For example, if you plan to do protection training, a strong prey drive is very important. Ask yourself why dogs go crazy chasing a ball, especially the ones that make noise. The erratic movements of a ball are similar to any prey animal,

which in turn perks the dog's instinct to want to give chase. In the dog's mind it's like chasing a prey. The predatory instinct does not stop with just chasing a ball, but can also turn toward other living things as well.

Taking into consideration that some dogs are just ball crazy, they have obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) over balls, leading them to have obsessive compulsive behavior, or OCB. Dogs that are ball crazy make great search dogs.

Dogs also can give chase to any moving objects: cars, golf carts, bicycles, skateboards, rollerblades and more. The urge to chase specific moving objects can also come from certain underlying issues, such as the noise decibel level of the moving object, which can irritate the dog's ears, or the turning motion of bicycle wheels. If a dog at a young age has had a bad experience involving any moving object, the dog will give chase in aggression toward a similar type of moving object.

For some types of dog training, a strong prey drive is needed. However, the flip side of the coin is that at any moment such a dog can give chase, and you may end up losing the

leash or falling down. Professional training can help curb and control the prey drive through obedience training.

In the South, with so many little lizards everywhere, dogs can go crazy and give chase, because the erratic movements of lizards amplify the prey drive in a dog. Once a dog catches its prey, it will either kill it or play toss till it dies or gets away.

Can this behavior be changed? It can be controlled to a certain degree, but you can't remove the prey drive 100 percent.

Have a woof woof of a month.

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