

# DOG LIFE



## Dealing with aggressive behavior in dogs

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Aggression can be found in every breed of dog, and there are many variables, causes and levels. Some types of aggression are based on genetics, while others are often man-made. Certain levels of aggression can be corrected or modified, depending on many factors.

Here are some forms of aggression: territorial aggression, food aggression, fear aggression, leash aggression, dog-to-dog aggression and dog-to-animal aggression, to name a few.

Aggression that is genetic-based must be addressed at an early stage. Other, nongenetic forms of aggression usually develop only over a period of time, when a good, balanced dog starts showing aggressive behavior.

Aggressive behavior in puppies can be altered, corrected or modified. When choosing a puppy, a quick way of telling if it is likely to become aggressive is to turn it on its back while holding it with one hand. If the puppy vigorously fights and tries to bite as well as growl, it is considered a dominant dog that will potentially be aggressive. If it just fights hard with no biting or growling, it's just a dominant puppy.

In many cases, owners create what I call man-made aggression by playing tug-of-war with their dogs. They do that because they find it cute and funny, without realizing the negative effect it is having on their dog. Many good dogs, regardless of breed, have become bad because they have been mistreated or egged on by their owners to chase or show aggression or bite.

From a young age, your dog should be socialized and go through proper obedience training. Aggressive behavior should be addressed right away; it doesn't change on its own. The older the dog, the

harder it is to correct or modify the aggressive behavior, which may have had years to reach that point.

If a dog has bitten or drawn blood, it will do so again; don't think it won't. No training can guarantee that it won't. We call those dogs ticking time bombs: today, tomorrow, next week, next month, or in a few months, you never know. On the other hand, sometimes in play a dog may jump at someone and catch a tooth on their skin, but this is not to be confused with aggressive behavior. The dog is merely uneducated and needs proper obedience training.

And sometimes when a normal dog is startled, it may show a sudden aggression, which then quickly subsides. This is not true aggression, but rather an

instinctive reaction to a sudden apparent threat.

Homeless and abandoned dogs can also show aggression that has resulted from being frightened, mistreated or hurt. The good news is that this can be changed through rehabilitation.

Aggression signs are low growls, nose elevated, baring teeth, hackles up, ears back and tail either straight up or straight. In fear-based aggression, the tail will be curved underneath the belly.

Fear-based aggression will be exhibited mostly when the dog is either cornered, approached quickly or hiding under something. These dogs are generally shy or timid, their ears back and tail curved underneath their belly.

The topic of aggression can be discussed and analyzed with no end. Results are best achieved using the formula that I have mentioned many times: patience, persistence, consistency & repetition.

### Something to know:

To clean your dog's ear, use baby oil (which loosens wax), a few drops in each ear, and rub the ear. Your dog will shake its head, loosening the wax buildup. Take a tissue, wrap it around your finger, and clean out the ears. Then use Q-tips to get in the crevices.

Animal Poison Control Center: 888-426-4435  
Have a woof woof of a month.



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