



## SHY & FEARFUL DOGS

There are things you can do to help shy and fearful dogs feel more safe and comfortable.

Dogs can be fearful for many reasons, including genetics, lack of early socialization, and traumatic experiences.

Fearful dogs are a vulnerable population and need patience, compassion, and awareness from their caregivers to help build their confidence and sense of ease. If a dog is constantly or repeatedly afraid of what is going on around them, it's going to be difficult for them to feel safe.

### RECOGNIZE THE DOG IS UNCOMFORTABLE OR SCARED

Body language of a shy, anxious, or afraid dog is sometimes obvious - and other times it isn't. Here are some examples of behavior that could be signs of fear:

WALKING AWAY, ATTEMPTING TO CREATE DISTANCE	BARKING	NOT ACCEPTING A TREAT
HIDING OR TRYING TO ESCAPE	YAWNING	WHINING
AVOIDING HANDS OR OTHER TYPES OF CONTACT	WIDE EYES	DROOLING
PANTING	TUCKING TAIL	FLATTENING BODY
LICKING LIPS	EARS BACK	CHASING
SHAKING	COWERING	SNARLING, GROWLING, SNAPPING, OR BITING



## HELP THE DOG FEEL SAFE

### **PRIORITY # 1**

Your first priority with a fearful dog is to help him or her feel safe and comfortable.

### **DISTANCE CAN BE A FEARFUL DOG'S BEST FRIEND**

If a dog is scared of certain types of people or stimuli, like strangers, people wearing hats, children, crowds, etc., that fear will be reduced by ensuring your dog does not need to get too-close-for-comfort, and that people your dog perceives as scary, don't have the opportunity to pet him or her.

### **STRANGER DANGER**

Often dog-lovers want to pet and interact with dogs they encounter while out on walks. As a guardian of a fearful dog, you may need to tell other people they may not pet your dog, because your dog wouldn't like it. A good idea is to carry treats for people to toss to him or her - if your dog won't eat, it's a sign that your dog needs even more distance. Get your dog far enough away that he or she is relaxed enough to eat, as this helps develop a positive association to new people.

### **MANAGE CHOSEN PEOPLE INTERACTIONS**

If your nervous dog does chooses to approach a person (even if it's you!), help reduce the potential fear involved in the encounter by having the person kneel down (as opposed to bending/looming over the dog), and let it be the dog's choice to sniff and touch the person, without the person petting the dog. It is quite common for dogs to be uncomfortable being pet on top of the head. If your dog does choose to engage in physical touch, encourage to person to do light petting under the chin. Also help educate others that dogs perceive being stared at in the eyes as threatening (eeks, scary!), so it is best to look down or to the side often to help the dog feel relaxed.

### **ENJOY PEACEFUL AREAS TOGETHER**

While building your dog's confidence, take your dog only to places he or she would be comfortable. For example, shy dogs don't always love going to the office on workdays or walking in busy or loud neighborhoods.

### **HAND-FEED YOUR DOG**

If your dog is fearful of reaching hands, hand-feeding treats and meals can help. At first, talk to your dog while you feed piece by piece. After a session or two, try touching with your other hand before each treat. If your dog moves away, go back to feeding without touching a few more times and then try a smaller touch before feeding. This way your dog learns that good things predictably come from hands.