



THE DOGS TRUST GUIDE TO BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

- and what to do about them

Behaviour problems can be seen in dogs from all walks of life (not just those from Rehoming Centres) and may appear to be more common than in the past. This could be due to the way that our lifestyles have changed. Many more dogs are left alone at home whilst we are out at work and in the home they are treated as members of the family, rather than a worker or just a 'pet'. There was a time when an aggressive or problem dog would have immediately been destroyed. Fortunately these days, owners give dogs a chance and work to resolve problems before turning to rehoming and using euthanasia as a last resort.

Why do problems occur?

Problems occur for a variety of reasons. Each dog and case is different and causes can be very simple or complicated. Your dog's problem(s) could be caused by one or several of the following factors:

- **Lack of socialisation** - From 3-14 weeks of age, puppies need to be safely exposed to as many different and new experiences as possible to prepare them for later life. Dogs that have not had this early socialisation may grow to be fearful of people, things and places and this can lead to many problems including aggression.
- **Boredom** - Dogs that are bored through lack of mental stimulation or 'things to do', may amuse themselves with destructive behaviour, for example.
- **Excess energy** - A lack of physical exercise can also lead to 'bad behaviour', as a dog must find other ways to get rid of his pent-up energy.
- **Owner behaviour** - Owners can train their dogs to 'behave badly' by accident, simply by giving attention at the wrong time.
- **Unrealistic owner expectations** - Because we tend to get very 'close' to our dogs, we sometimes forget that they are still animals and may treat them more like children. We may think that they have more 'intelligence' or 'awareness' than they really do and these unfair expectations can lead to disappointment.
- **Breed specific traits** - Certain types and breeds of dog have been bred for hundreds of years for specific tasks, which may be incompatible with living in a typical family home.
- **Bad breeding practices** - Unscrupulous breeders may have indiscriminately bred their dogs purely for money, without considering temperament.
- **Diet** - It is thought that some dogs' behaviour may be affected by what they are fed. It is possible that diets that are too high in protein or the wrong type of protein may cause hyperactivity in certain dogs. Allergies to certain ingredients may also adversely affect behaviour.
- **Inadequate or incorrect training** - Without proper training, dogs may be uncontrollable.

So, what should you do if you have a problem with your dog's behaviour?

- **Read on** - To get an idea of what type of problem it is and whether you need to see a trainer or behaviourist.
- **Take your dog to the vet** - Some behavioural problems can be caused by medical conditions or illnesses - so it is essential to rule out this possibility.
- **Ask your vet to refer you to a reputable behaviourist** – You and your dog will need to have a personal consultation with the behaviourist to accurately diagnose the problem and recommend a treatment plan for you to follow. With some problems you may need to attend follow-up consultations, or keep in contact by phone if any difficulties occur.

Going to a behaviourist can be quite expensive - so please make sure that you find a reputable one, such as a member of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC) or the UK Registry of Canine Behaviourists (UKRCB). If you have pet insurance, remember to check the policy details, as you may be able to claim for the cost of consultations.

If you have adopted a dog from Dogs Trust and are having problems with his training or behaviour, please contact the Rehoming Centre that you adopted him from, for free help and advice.

Common behaviour problems

The following behaviour problems are some of the most common that are referred to behaviourists by vets. Each problem has an example of how it may appear to the owner, possible causes and how it might be dealt with.

The most common behaviour problems include (in no particular order):

- Training problems
- Housetraining problems
- Problems during travel
- Repetitive behaviours
- Attention-seeking behaviours
- Fearful and phobic behaviours
- Separation problems
- Inappropriate chase behaviour
- Aggression - towards people and other dogs

Training problems

include:

- Your dog appears to ignore your commands

Possible causes include:

- Under-training
- Using training techniques that are inconsistent or confusing for the dog
- Fear of punishment use during training
- Medical conditions - i.e. deafness

Example - Why doesn't my dog do what I tell him to do?

One of the main reasons that dogs don't do what we tell them is because we haven't taken enough time to train them properly, or the training that has been given merely confuses them. Just because a dog happens to guess the correct response to a command once, doesn't mean that he understands the command properly or that he will get it right the next time. Without consistent repetitive training with positive rewards, giving the correct response can be a real hit or miss experience for your dog and can lead to him giving up.

If you have used punishment in training for incorrect responses -either physical or verbal - it can affect the way your dog acts when told to do something. If your dog feels threatened, he may 'freeze' or 'fool around' to try to avoid further punishment. If you get angry with him for doing this, he may then try even harder with these 'signals' and a vicious circle begins.

Dogs can also find it difficult to generalise in their learning. If you teach a dog to come on command perfectly in your home or in a training class, he will not automatically be able to take that training experience and apply it to another environment or place - so he won't necessarily come to you as well in the park, without further training.

So, what can you do?

- If you are having problems, go to a good training class for support and instruction on the best training techniques for your dog.
- Make training fun and non-threatening for your dog so that he is happy to do what you ask him.
- Training should always be based on positive rewards, be consistent and repeated until your dog really understands each command you train him to do. Make sure that you train the same command in different circumstances and environments so that he can learn to generalise. Make training a life-long part of owning your dog -he will forget commands if you do not use them enough in everyday life.

Further information/courses of action

- See a vet if you think your dog may be deaf and a trainer if you need help to get over particular training problems.
- Go to a good local training class. See the APDT for more details in the 'Useful contacts' section.
- Perhaps try a different way of training such as clicker training, to see if this suits you both better.

Housetraining problems

include:

- Soiling in the house or in an inappropriate area
- Refusing to go to the toilet in front of the owner and then messing in secret
- Soiling when left alone
- Urinating when excited, nervous or anxious
- Urine 'scent' marking in the home

Possible causes include:

- Medical problems - including incontinence and being too physically immature to be able to 'hold' it for long enough periods.
- Anxiety or submissiveness
- Inadequate or incorrect toilet training
- Effect of past punishment by owner, or owner's behaviour

Example - Why does my dog wait until we get back to the house after our walk, to go to the toilet?

If a dog is punished (shouted at, told off, hit, shaken or had his nose rubbed in an 'accident') for going to toilet in the wrong place during toilet training or at any other time, the dog may learn that it is not safe to go to toilet in front of his owner. Some dogs may learn that it was actually the place that was wrong, but many others won't. This may include going outside as well as inside because the dog has learnt that to avoid punishment he must not go in front of people - regardless of where he is. So, even though all through the walk your dog is desperate to go to the toilet, he will wait until he gets home and into the spare bedroom where he can poo out of sight. If when the mess is found later, you take him upstairs, show him his mess and tell him off - this will reinforce his belief that being anywhere near his poo and you is bad and to be avoided.

Another possible reason for this problem may simply be that the owner has always ended the walk as soon as the dog has gone to the toilet. The dog may then have learned to 'hold on' for as long as possible to make sure that his walk doesn't end too quickly. He then gets 'caught short' on return to the house.

So, what can you do?

- Never punish your dog for 'accidents' in the house. Dogs never have accidents out of malice or on purpose, so should never be punished for this. Dogs that look guilty when you return home to find an unpleasant doggy mess, do so merely because they are used to being punished on your return. They display a submissive or appeasing body and face posture (which does look very guilty!) to try to prevent the telling off that is about to come.
- Always clear up 'accidents' quietly without a fuss and out of sight of your dog. Wash down the effected area with a biological solution (diluted biological washing powder will do) or a specialist commercial cleaner for pet odours from a pet shop or supermarket, to completely remove the smell.
- Retrain your dog by taking him outside every hour on the hour to go to toilet and confine him to a small sleeping area or tie him to you so that you can supervise him constantly the rest of the time. When you let him outside, watch him from a window so that he feels safe to go to toilet without you being there. If you see him start to go to the toilet, quietly walk outside and give him gentle praise, being careful not to interrupt what he is doing. When he has finished, give him lots of excited praising, treats or have a fun game with him as a reward. If this is successful, he should start to feel better about going outside. After a while you can move onto standing in the doorway and then to standing outside with him when he 'goes'. Always heap praise and rewards onto him when he has finished going where you want him to and ignore any accidents. He'll soon get the idea.
- In time you can even introduce a command word as he starts to 'go' and train him to go whenever you tell him to. Please remember to pick up his poo in public places.

Further information/courses of action

- Please take your dog to the vet to rule out any medical causes.
- You may need to see a behaviourist or trainer to help you decide the correct course of treatment and subsequent training.

Problems during travel

can include:

- Barking at things outside of the car
- Whimpering, shaking or salivating during travel
- Sickness or diarrhoea
- Jumping around excitedly in the car
- Destructive behaviour in the car - chewing the car interior

Possible causes include:

- Over-excitement in anticipation of an exciting or fearful event at the end of the journey, i.e. a walk or visit to the vet
- Car sickness, or fear of the car's motion
- Aggression or protectiveness of the car
- Over-stimulation from seeing exciting things out of the car windows

Example - Why does my dog bark non-stop when we travel in the car?

If a dog can see exciting things (a man on a bike, pedestrians, other dogs etc) outside of the car, he may become frustrated or excited, which may cause him to bark. When the journey ends he is let out and 'rewarded' for his barking with a walk. The dog has learned that barking in the car results in a walk and will now be more likely to bark on the next journey. This is a very easily formed habit for the dog, especially if his walk is the most exciting part of his day.

So, what can you do?

- Firstly, always make sure that your dog is secured safely within your vehicle using a car harness or travel cage.
- If your dog is excited because of what he can see outside of the car, then try to tether him in the footwell so that he cannot see out of the window. If this is not possible, a travel cage covered with a blanket may work. Always remember to reward him when he is quiet.
- If he is excited because he is anticipating a walk or other rewarding event, you will need to start by training him to settle in a stationary car - praise good behaviour and ignore any unwanted barking. When you have achieved this, you can progress to turning the engine on. If he is reliably quiet, you can then try moving the car a short distance, (a few feet) arriving back where you started. You can then gradually increase the distance travelled, as long as your dog stays quiet. At the beginning of the training you will need to get someone else to do the driving, so that you can safely concentrate on commanding and rewarding your dog.
- If you shout at your dog when he barks, he may regard this as praise, or think that you are joining in with him - confirming that he is correct to be excited. Either way, you will be inadvertently encouraging his behaviour. As difficult as it will undoubtedly be, you must only talk to him or give attention when he is quiet and well behaved. If he won't stop barking even though you are ignoring him, you will need to take a passenger who can do something to interrupt the barking (blow a loud whistle or spray a jet of water into his mouth for example). Then when he is startled into being quiet you can reward him for the desirable behaviour. This will be very short periods to start with but should increase with time and training.

Further information/courses of action

- For very bad problems you may need to see a behaviourist or trainer to assist you.

Repetitive behaviours

can include:

- Tail chasing
- Staring at shadows or points of light on walls or the floor
- Compulsive licking or chewing of own body
- Constant pacing, often around the same route
- Constant barking for no apparent reason

Possible causes include:

- A learned behaviour through accidental rewarding by the owner
- It is a self-rewarding action that can relieve boredom or stress
- A medical problem or allergy

Example - Why does my dog chase his tail until he is exhausted?

At first, your dog may have chased his tail because he had an anal gland problem or a fleabite on his behind and was trying to lick the affected area. This may have caused members of your family to comment or laugh at the dog, who may have regarded this as praise, which would then reinforce this behaviour. This may have happened more than once, each time making the tail chasing behaviour more ingrained. Once the tail chasing got to the point where it was considered to be a problem, any reprimands would also be seen as praise by the dog, therefore encouraging rather than stopping the behaviour.

Repetitive behaviour may also have the effect of releasing endorphins into the dog's body. Endorphins are natural chemicals that sedate and give a feeling of euphoria. If a dog is stressed or bored, this release of endorphins will make him feel better - another reason why repetitive behaviour can develop and become a habit.

So, what can you do?

- First, try to ignore the behaviour and just immediately walk away from the dog every time that the tail chasing starts.
- If this has no effect then you may need to interrupt the behaviour with a loud noise or by restraining the dog with his lead. Do not interrupt the dog by using your voice or by touching him, as he may see this as a reward. As soon as he stops the undesirable behaviour, give him something else to do that is more appropriate - play a game of fetch, or a tug game, or do some fun training with him. Interact with the dog to encourage an alternative, desirable behaviour and reward him for this.
- If the problem is caused by boredom then provide your dog with sufficient mental stimulation. Make him work for his food - scatter dry kibble around the house or garden for him to forage and find during the day, fill a 'Kong' toy with dog biscuits and gravy and freeze it for your dog to work at. Take up clicker training, or scent work, or take him to agility classes. Make sure that he has at least one good walk a day off lead, preferably two.

Further information/courses of action

- Always see your vet first to rule out any medical causes.
- If necessary, get a referral to a behaviourist.

Attention-seeking

can include:

- Whining or barking - when you are busy doing something that doesn't include your dog
- Stealing items of clothing or anything that makes you chase after your dog
- Nervous or fear related behaviour which makes you 'comfort' your dog

Possible causes include:

- Inadvertent or accidental rewarding by owner - i.e. giving attention (nice or nasty!) to your dog when he demands it by doing any of the above

Example - Why does my dog whine and pull on my clothes when I'm trying to have a telephone conversation?

During the telephone conversation all your attention is focused away from your dog. He may well sit next to you and then go through his repertoire of training - sitting, standing, laying etc in order to gain your attention, but because this behaviour is unobtrusive it doesn't work. He will then try other things and, of course, 'bad' behaviour will gain your attention and get a reaction from you. Barking and pulling at your clothes will work, as it interrupts what you are doing - with time your dog will learn to do this to maximum effect, whenever he wants your attention.

Dogs that crave attention do not differentiate between nice attention and being told off - so punishment won't have the desired result. The dog will be happy as long as his owner acknowledges him.

So, what can you do?

- Ignore all problem attention seeking behaviour and it should eventually stop. You give your dog attention by talking to him, reprimanding him, touching him and looking at him - so do not do any of these if he is being demanding. Remember, that his attention seeking will get worse before it gets better, as he will try his hardest to get your attention before giving up. You must persevere!
- If simply ignoring doesn't work, you may need a trainer or behaviourist to teach your dog a signal of 'non-reward' (this is not the same as punishment), so that you can indicate to him that he is doing something wrong and that he should stop it.

Further information/courses of action

- See a behaviourist or trainer if necessary, especially if the attention seeking involves aggression of any sort.

Fearful & phobic behaviours

include:

- Shaking
- Hiding or refusal to go outside
- Inappropriate urination (i.e. inside the house)
- Running away when scared
- Aggression

Possible causes include:

- A lack of socialisation during early life
- Inadvertent or accidental rewarding by owner (comforting)
- The association of a person/thing/noise etc. with a traumatic event
- Breed disposition (a genetic trait)

Example - Why does my dog shake, hide and refuse to go outside after hearing fireworks or a car engine backfiring?

If a dog hasn't been safely exposed to many different experiences, including loud noises during the essential socialisation period (3 to 14 weeks of age) he may not be able to cope with novel, frightening sounds like fireworks or loud engine noises as he gets older.

If the dog then hears a loud bang whilst he is in the garden or on a walk, he may associate the area where he is standing with the loud noise and being frightened. This will make him reluctant or refuse to go there again for a while. If the owner sees that the dog is scared and comforts him, the dog may take this as praise, which will make his fear worse. This may happen more than once, each time encouraging the dog's fear to grow.

So, what can you do?

- Prevention is better than cure - so ensure that your puppy has the chance to experience many different situations that have the potential to be frightening in the future.
- If you have a dog that has just started to show fear of loud noises, try your best not to comfort him, as you will encourage the phobia. Ignore your dog as much as possible so that he learns to cope on his own. As soon as your dog returns to his normal behaviour, or approaches something that 'spooks' him, give him some calm verbal praise.
- Once your dog is fearful of going outside you will need to re-associate your garden or park with nice things for your dog. So start to feed, train, play, treat and praise him in the garden. Be a little off-hand with him indoors and pile on the attention whenever he is outside, until he is happy to go outside willingly.
- If your dog already has an ingrained fear of loud noises then you will need to get your dog used to them. Obtain a recording of the relevant noises and start a program of playing it very quietly during periods of pleasant activities for your dog (e.g. during dinnertime). Gradually, over days or weeks, increase the volume of the tape. If he shows even a very slight fearful reaction to the sound at any time, turn it off and next time reduce the volume until your dog is comfortable again. After a couple of days you can start to increase the volume again. Eventually your dog should be able cope with much louder noises, although he may always have a slight problem. Incorrect use of this technique can make problems worse, so see a behaviourist or trainer for advice before proceeding.

Further information/courses of action

- At very noisy times such as around Bonfire night, provide your dog with a safe hiding place (a cardboard box would do), turn up the volume of your television or radio to drown out the firework noises and perhaps ask your vet to prescribe sedatives for dogs that become very distressed.

- If fear or phobic reactions are severe or cause aggression in your dog you must see a behaviourist.
- Your vet may be able to prescribe medication for phobias in the short term while treatment is being undertaken.
- Ask your vet about DAP – Dog Appeasing Pheromone. This is a scent that comes in a plug-in diffuser that can comfort your dog and help him cope with his phobias.

Separation problems

include any of the following when a dog is left alone:

- Destructive behaviour
- Barking or howling
- Urination/defecation
- Self-mutilation

Possible causes include:

- Anxiety due to over-attachment to owner
- Boredom or excess energy
- Dogs are social animals that can't always cope without company
- 'Triggers' - such as the doorbell or telephone ringing, letters arriving, thunder, people passing the front of the house - may cause frustration and/or over-excitement

Example - Why does my dog tear up the furniture when I leave him on his own?

This could have a variety of causes (as above) - so if possible, set up a video camera to see what happens when you leave your dog alone. This will help a behaviourist to diagnose the cause more accurately.

So, what can you do?

- Don't leave your dog for extended periods of time. Dogs Trust do not recommend that dogs should be left for longer than 4 hours at a time.
- If the cause is identified as anxiety, then you may need to start to cool your relationship with your dog. If you are less 'close', then your dog will start to learn to be more independent and less reliant on you for company. Don't allow your dog to follow you from room to room and don't let him sleep in your bedroom. Ask a behaviourist to help desensitise your dog to your departure and learn to cope with being alone.
- If the cause is boredom, make sure that you leave your dog something to do whilst you are away. Instead of feeding him his dinner in one 'predictable' meal each day, use it to encourage him to express his natural foraging behaviour to use up all that spare time. Leave him a food-stuffed 'Kong' toy to work on, or scatter dried food all around the house and garden for him to find. Hide treats around the house, so that he has to search for them. Alternate these ways of feeding to keep him interested. Many dogs will sleep after being fed, so this is another benefit.
- Make sure that he has had sufficient exercise to wear him out before he is left.
- If 'triggers' are involved, try to remove the possibility of them occurring - i.e. pull curtains closed if passers-by at the front of the house is the problem, or turn off the doorbell and telephone when you are not at home.

Further information/courses of action

- Separation problems can be complicated so try to see a behaviourist for advice.

Inappropriate chase behaviour

includes:

- Fanatically chasing joggers, cars, cyclists, trains - anything that you don't want your dog to chase.
- Uncontrollable chasing that can be dangerous to the dog and/or whatever he is chasing.

Possible causes include:

- It is a natural predatory behaviour
- It is fun for the dog
- Fear - a dog that is scared of something may chase it once it is going away, as he will feel rewarded by its continued retreat.

Example - Why does my dog chase after joggers in the park?

Dogs chase after things for one of two main reasons - because it is fun, or because they are expressing predatory behaviour.

Chasing can be fun and rewarding for a dog. Many dogs chase balls or a favourite toy when it is thrown for them in the garden. On walks, we don't always take toys to occupy the dog and so the next best thing for him to chase is a jogger. Often the jogger will speed up, which is a reward in itself for the dog, making him even more excited.

Predatory behaviour is instinctive (if it moves - chase it!) and based on the hunting ritual in wolves. Although the jogger won't be killed at the end of the chase - he may be at risk of receiving a nasty bite.

So, what can you do?

- Avoid situations where your dog and the things he is chasing may be at risk and keep your dog on his lead and/or muzzled until you are able to solve or work on the problem.
- If your dog chases merely for fun, teach him an effective recall and take his favourite toy on walks. Restrict his access to it in the home environment so that it is even more important to him when you are in the vicinity of joggers. Use his toy to distract him and encourage him to chase and retrieve it, instead of the jogger.
- If your dog is expressing predatory behaviour, you will need to train him to return to you on command. This can be achieved using a food reward or in certain cases aversion techniques may need to be used. This can be difficult so a reputable trainer or behaviourist will need to advise you.

Further information/courses of action

- If you're not sure if your dog is chasing for fun or for predatory reasons, please see a behaviourist or trainer to clarify, as the correct training techniques for either must be used.

Aggression

Aggression towards people or/and other dogs must be dealt with in a different way to the preceding problems. This is because the effects that may be caused by an incorrect diagnosis and subsequent treatment have the potential to be devastating and dangerous to all concerned. Because of this, professional or qualified advice should always be sought following a veterinary examination. We cannot go into detailed advice on specific aggression-related problems, but we can look at why dogs become aggressive in the simplest terms and how you can avoid problems starting.

Why does a dog become aggressive?

When a dog feels threatened, like most animals (including humans) he will usually do at least one of three things. He will 'freeze' (become motionless and hope that the threat goes away), 'flee' (run away from the threat to safety) or 'fight' (show aggressive behaviour by growling, baring teeth, snapping or biting to force the threat to go away). Dogs will naturally avoid fighting and use it as a last resort because it poses a risk to their own safety through possible injury, however, certain circumstances will enable a dog to learn that fighting will work best and encourage him to use aggression more often. Here is an example:

A dog is on his lead and is tied up outside a shop whilst his owner is inside. He has not been socialised properly with all types of people and is frightened of strangers. A passer-by who likes dogs but has never had one of his own and doesn't know how to tell if a dog is scared or happy by reading the body language, approaches the dog intending to stroke him.

- The dog sees the stranger coming and feels threatened, so he freezes.
- The stranger keeps moving towards the dog, so the dog realises that freezing hasn't worked.
- The dog then tries to flee, but his lead is tied to a metal post and prevents him from running away from the threat - and the stranger is still getting closer.
- The dog starts to growl as the stranger puts his hand out to stroke him and then as this still does not work, he lunges and snaps at the man's fingers.
- This finally brings the desired result, as the man backs-off and hurries away. The dog has learnt a valuable lesson - that snapping and showing aggression is the best way to remove a threat.

The dog is now far more likely to use aggression in the first instance, rather than as a last resort.

What makes a dog feel threatened?

A threat to a dog can be a fear for his own physical safety but he may also react aggressively to defend a threat to his valuable 'resources'. For example, if he fears that another dog or a human will take something that he values very highly - a toy, his food or a favourite comfortable sleeping or resting area such as a sofa.

Other considerations

- Dogs that are in pain or are ill may be more likely to bite if approached or touched - so owners must try to be aware of their dog's physical state at all times.
- Something that can make aggressive behaviour worse is that we tend to punish dogs and puppies for displaying the more minor threat displays such as growling, baring teeth or air snapping which dogs use as a warning. When a dog is threatened at a later stage, he may then completely skip the warnings and go straight to biting because he has learnt from experience that he will be punished for showing these 'lesser' displays.
- A dog that shows aggressive behaviour is not a bad dog. Biting and aggression is a normal, natural behaviour for all dogs, as are the often-preceding warning displays. However natural aggressive behaviour is, it is unacceptable when dogs live with humans and it is a sad fact that many dogs are destroyed because they have bitten when this could have been prevented.

What can be done?

With aggression problems, prevention is definitely better than cure. Prevention in the form of socialisation of puppies is essential. They must be prepared for situations where they may feel threatened in the future. Owners also need to educate and make themselves aware of their dog's own body language and not ignore the warning indications that their dog is showing.

If your dog is already showing aggressive behaviour towards humans or dogs, then a professional behaviourist will use various techniques depending on the type and cause of the aggression involved, to solve or improve the problem.

In the meantime we would recommend that you consider using a muzzle on your dog in situations where he is likely to be aggressive - especially in public because of the legal implications involved. This is to protect your dog from getting into trouble, as much as to protect other dogs or people from being bitten. Please ask your vet or a behaviourist to show you how to safely introduce your dog to wearing a muzzle. It would also be very advisable to obtain third party insurance against your dog causing an injury.

Further information

- If you are worried about your dog's aggressive behaviour, please see a behaviourist for advice.

So, is it really a dog or a human problem?

Much of what we class as bad behaviour is in fact, perfectly normal behaviour for a dog - but is nevertheless out of place and unacceptable in a human family environment. So what can we do?

We can train our dogs to fit in with us - or adapt our own lifestyles and expectations so that the problems don't seem so serious. It is a sad fact that some dogs just don't fit in with certain families and may need to be rehomed with another family which is more suitable and some dogs need to be working as assistance or service dogs in order to reach their full potential.

As responsible dog owners, we have to choose our dogs carefully in the first place and make sure that they have as good a start in life as possible. Dogs must be bred with good temperaments as a priority and puppies must be socialised correctly to prepare them for their lives ahead. We must provide our dogs with sufficient mental and physical stimulation so that they do not need to amuse themselves in destructive ways. We need to ensure that our dogs have company, so that they do not suffer and we should be aware of how we effect them with our own behaviour. They must be trained in a kind, fair and consistent manner to help them understand the boundaries that we set for them.

We have to remember that dogs aren't little people in furry coats - we must give them credit for the wonderful creatures that they are in their own right. If we make the effort to educate our dogs and ourselves, perhaps problems will be avoided or resolved more easily and fewer innocent dogs will be destroyed or abandoned in the future for something that is ultimately our fault.

Further reading

If you want out find out more about your dog's behaviour, here are some books that we would recommend:

Why Does My Dog? – by John Fisher
Published by Souvenir Press – ISBN 028563058X

What is My Dog Thinking? – by Gwen Bailey
Published by Hamlyn – ISBN 0600604233

Understanding Your Dog – by Dr Elsa Flint
Published by New Holland – ISBN 184330449X

How to Speak Dog – by Stanley Coren
Published by Simon & Schuster – ISBN 074320297X

The Culture Clash – by Jean Donaldson
Published by James & Kenneth – ISBN 1888047054

Getting in Touch with Your Dog – by Linda Tellington-Jones
Published by Kenilworth Press – ISBN 1872119417

Good Dog Behaviour – by Gwen Bailey
Published by Collins – ISBN 0004133218

Useful contacts

Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC)
P O Box 46, Worcester, WR8 9AB
01386 751151
www.apbc.org.uk

UK Registry of Canine Behaviourists (UKRCB)
53a Oxford Gardens, London, W10 5JU
020 7243 0359
www.ukrcb.co.uk

Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT)
Peacocks Farm, Northchapel, Petworth, West Sussex, GU28 9JB
01428 707620
www.apdt.co.uk

You may also be interested in these other factsheets from Dogs Trust: Barking, Basic Dog Training, Feline friendly?, Housetraining, Indoor kennels, Neutering questions and answers, A new baby and the family dog, Socialisation and Training your dog to come to you

For more information about Dogs Trust, to become a member, sponsor a long-term resident or help us in our campaigns please call 020 7837 0006 or write to:

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www.dogstrust.org.uk

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