

How to avoid conflict between dogs

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CONFLICT

A photograph of two golden retrievers in a grassy field. One dog is standing and looking at the other, who is lying down and holding a stuffed monkey toy in its mouth. The scene is set outdoors with green grass and a blurred background.

01

TYPES OF CONFLICT

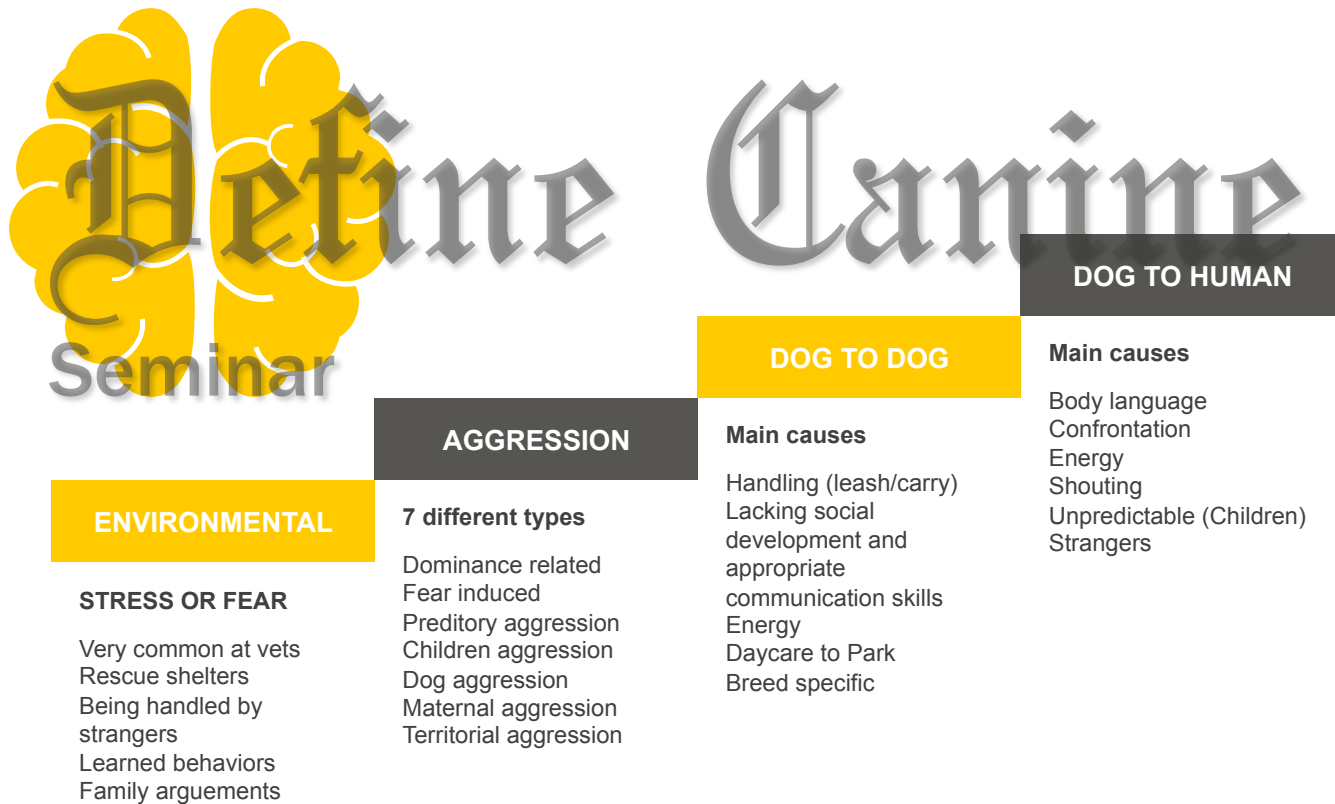
02

HOW DOES CONFLICT OCCUR

03

WAYS TO HANDLE CONFLICT

TYPES OF CONFLICT



Look for signs of conflict



Definite Canine Seminar

Look for signs of conflict



General Displacement behavior

Often when asking a dog to do something it simply doesn't want to do it will pretend to do something else like sniff the ground. Look over there.



Obedience displacement

Dog knows and can hear you asking for focus or obedience and the dog responds with a focus to something else. Often at high level obedience when nervous handlers



Responding to your stress or body language

Often shows after your 50th attempt at recall. You may have seen the child or person that asks to pet your dog and the dog just doesn't want to meet them – See Treat/Retreat drills to people and greeting strangers



Aggressive or confrontational dogs

Dogs will often avoid conflict by sniffing grass or being really interested in a neutral object to change the topic from them to it.

For video on displacement: [Click here](https://youtu.be/4CQoPPYmveQ)

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Understanding Dog Approach-Avoidance Behaviors

Approach

In approach, the animal may be drawn to a situation because it may have produced positive outcomes in the past. Curiosity often draws animals to investigate something. If past investigative approaches have resulted in positive outcomes, the dog may be more likely to be drawn to new things in the future. Approach, in these cases, involves positive reinforcement. Neophobic dogs, on the other hand, are very tentative to embrace new stimuli and may stop investigating because of past negative experiences.

What is considered positive or negative though depends on the dog. The dog may feel drawn to a person because in the past this person has fed him food, but the dog may be also drawn to move closer to a person when he does so offensively, such as to send the mailman away. Therefore, it's very important to read the dog's accompanying body language/vocalizations to tell if approach is meant to decrease distance or increase it.

Seminar

Neophobia in dogs is simply a term used to depict a fear of new things. The term comes from the word "neo," which means new and the word "phobia," which means fear. Affected dogs tend to have an exaggerated fear of anything they haven't been exposed to before. Because dogs cannot talk, the evidence of this fear is manifested through body language, which includes dilated pupils, tucked tails, flattened ears, panting, a lowered body stance, and other signs of the fight or flight response.

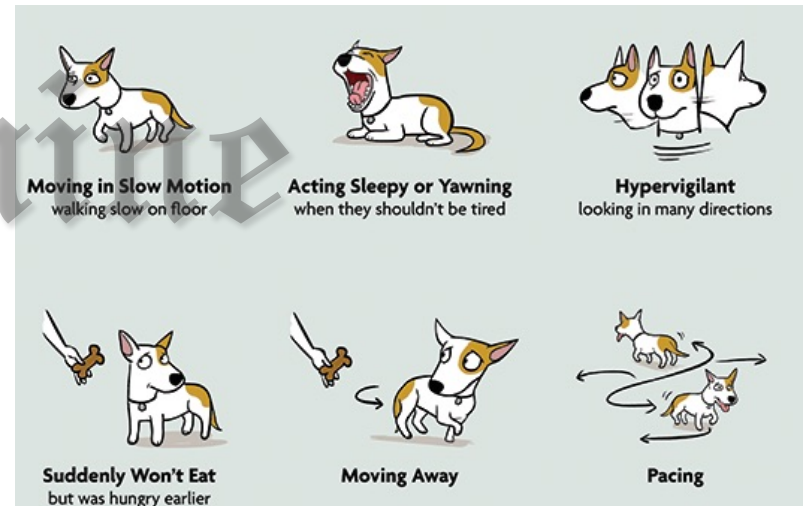
How To Deal With Approach Avoidance Conflict in Dogs?

Approach avoidance conflict was first introduced by psychologist Kurt Lewin, a founder of modern social psychology. Indeed, this phenomenon is popular among people as well as dogs.

William James, in his book *Principles of Psychology*, claims that pleasure is a "tremendous reinforcer" of behavior and pain is a "tremendous inhibitor" of behavior. This is very true when it comes to dog behavior. Dogs will naturally seek pleasure and try to avoid pain/discomfort if there's awareness of it.

In certain circumstances, dogs may be drawn and repelled by a stimulus at the same time. This causes the dog to engage in approach and avoidance behavior. When the dog is far from the stimulus, it appears desirable, but then as the dog gets closer, the stimulus appears less desirable and even scary.

It's far preferable if the owner would give out food at the sight of the stranger, or if the stranger can be briefed in tossing the food past the dog instead of letting the dog come so close as to startle him. The treat-retreat game can be helpful in this case.



How to deal with conflict

A

The confrontational dog

Often seen at the end of a leash often retractable out in front of the handler displaying confrontational body language

B

The conflicted dog

Recognizes the dog and shows displacement/stress/or fight flight response

Potential ways to deal with this

Depending on the stimulus. Often it can be as easy as crossing the street (giving space or minimizing the negative reinforcer) to allow the other party to get by without an incident or making the interaction much worse.

Often actually working the issue in that moment can be hugely beneficial for both parties especially if you frequently visit that same space or spot. Redirection, obedience, treat/retreat, When your dog encounters a scary stimuli, your attitude counts! Never force your dog to interact with what scares her. Talk to you dog in a cheerful tone of voice and reward her promptly with high-value treats if she takes initiative to approach. If you notice a trigger at a distance and you know your dog will react fearfully, do an about face and an emergency U-turn. Instill confidence in your dog through clicker training and targeting. You can invest in calming aids such as a Thunder-shirt, calming diffusers, and music therapy these may help. Read the books *Scaredy Dog* and *Cautious Canine*.