

Problem Behaviors

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Problem Behaviors in Dogs are:

- Undesirable for humans
- Either normal or abnormal for dogs
- A leading cause for **relinquishment, euthanasia, and poor welfare outcomes**
- Addressed with positive reinforcement training and the guidance of an expert

3 Steps to Fewer Problem Behaviors

- 1 Prevent and recognize problematic behavior through careful monitoring
- 2 Intervene appropriately when problem behavior is identified
- 3 Consult an expert for guidance

Minimize Problem Behaviors in Dogs from Breeding Kennels through **Prevention!**

- Breed for temperament as problem behaviors can have a genetic basis (e.g., social fearfulness)
- Ensure high-quality maternal care in puppyhood
- Provide appropriate outlets for normal behaviors
- Modify practices to minimize stress



Set Dogs up for Behavioral Success!

Provide:

- Food & water
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Shelter
- Veterinary care
- Socialization
- Social interactions
- Enrichment
- Positive training
- Positive caretaker interactions including low stress handling

Minimize Problem Behaviors in Dogs from Breeding Kennels with **Recognition!**

- Understand what is normal versus abnormal dog behavior
- Monitor behavior to recognize problem behavior early


Learn More:

[At-a-Glance Behavior Problems: Recognition](#)

Minimize Problem Behaviors in Dogs from Breeding Kennels with **Intervention!**

- Use only science-based humane interventions
- Use positive training interventions and tools

[Learn More: At-a-Glance Behavior Problems: Intervention](#)



Minimize Problem Behaviors in Dogs from Breeding Kennels by **Consulting a Behavior Expert!**

- Seek professional guidance to address problem behavior
- Include new owner counselling and support services

[Learn More: At-a-Glance Behavior Problems: Experts](#)

What **Not** to Do

- Breed with disregard for temperament (problem behaviors can have a genetic basis)
- Fail to meet basic welfare needs of dogs (e.g., socialization, social interactions, enrichment, exercise, veterinary care, food/drink, sleep)
- Ignore behavior, missing early signs of problem behavior



A fluffy brown dog with blue eyes is looking to the right. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a person's hand near the dog's head.

What Not to Do

- Create fear, pain, or damage dog welfare
- Use interventions and tools that damage dog welfare (e.g., punishment-based, shock collars, prong collars)
- Attempt intervention without professional guidance
- Disconnect from new owners without providing re-homing support



FAQ #1 Should I keep dogs from engaging in normal dog behaviors that are undesirable to humans?

No!!

- Engaging in natural dog behaviors is critical for dog welfare
- The key is recognizing the contexts in which they are okay versus not okay for people
- The next step is to provide an opportunity for dogs to engage in the behavior appropriately
- For example, digging in a garden is likely undesirable. Providing a sandbox for the dog to dig in safely without destruction is a great solution.

FAQ #2

Are abnormal dog behaviors concerning?

Yes!

Abnormal behaviors (e.g., stereotypies) are a sign of compromised welfare in any dog in any environment or situation.

Appropriate intervention is needed to address the cause of the behaviors.





FAQ #3

Are there specific normal behaviors that are defined as problem behaviors?

No!!

- Behaviors are not inherently problematic, rather, they are undesirable to a select individual in a context
- What is problematic is unique to each dog, person, and environment involved
- For example, normal puppy behavior looks very different from that of a juvenile, which also differs greatly from adult dog behavior

Learn More:

- [At-a-Glance Behavior Problems: Recognition](#)
- [At-a-Glance Behavior Problems: Intervention](#)
- [At-a-Glance Behavior Problems: Experts](#)
- [Behavioral Indicators of Lack of Socialization in the Dog](#)
- [Overpopulation or Too Many Unwanted Pets?
Perspective on Concepts and Management Approaches](#)