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# *Dog Behaviors & Body Language*



Presented by  
**Taylor Frank**

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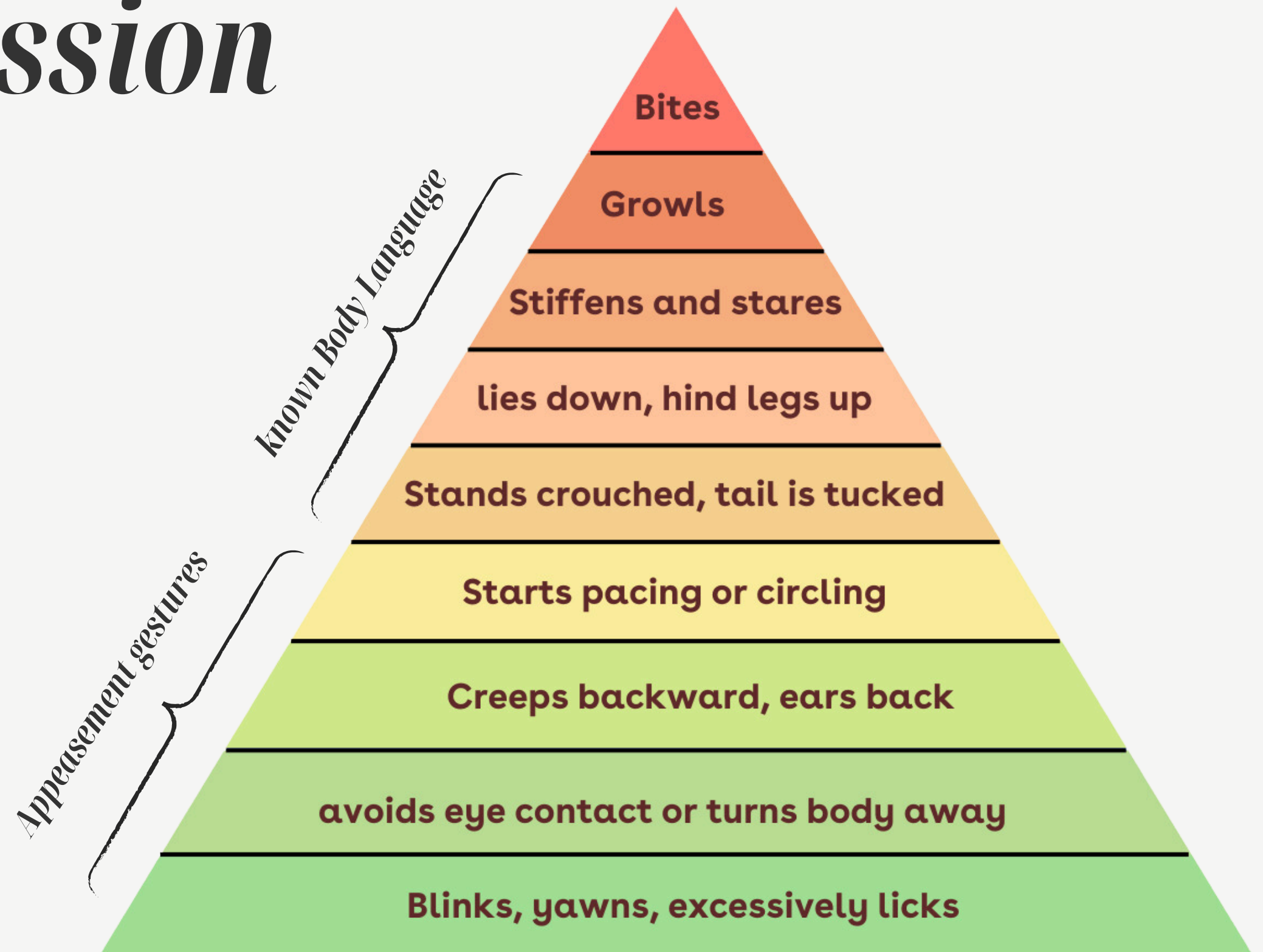
*Dogs do speak, but only to  
those who know how to listen.*

—— Orhan Pamuk

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# *Ladder of aggression*

Dogs communicate their discomfort with a situation and a desire to end an interaction by using visual cues. Recognizing the early gestures is important so a perceived stress or threat to a dog can be removed and negative situations be avoided.



# *Appeasement Gestures*

# *What is an appeasement gesture?*

Appeasement gestures are also referred to as "Cutoff Cues" or "Calming Signals", **dogs use appeasement gestures when feeling stressed, uncomfortable, or fearful.** Essentially, these behaviors communicate a desire for a perceived threat to stop, or that your dog has no desire for confrontation. **These can be tricky to identify as they're often mislabeled.**

Mislabeled these gestures is often why people state that a dog bite "came out of nowhere!" or that their dog was "completely fine and tail wagging!" before an incident. It's important to realize that appeasement gestures are made to avoid a potential threat and/or to change the outcome of an interaction. **As a result, if the source of a perceived threat does not subside (i.e. a stranger doesn't give the dog space, a child keeps tugging on the dog's ears), an escalation of aggression can sometimes happen.**

# Examples

Lip or nose-licking

Submissive grinning

Yawning or sneezing

Sniffing

Stiff body or movement

Scratching

Averting gaze (whale eye)

Lowering ears, head or neck

Avoidance

Sweaty paws

Faster than normal blinking

Drooling

Pacing

Whining

# *Body Language*

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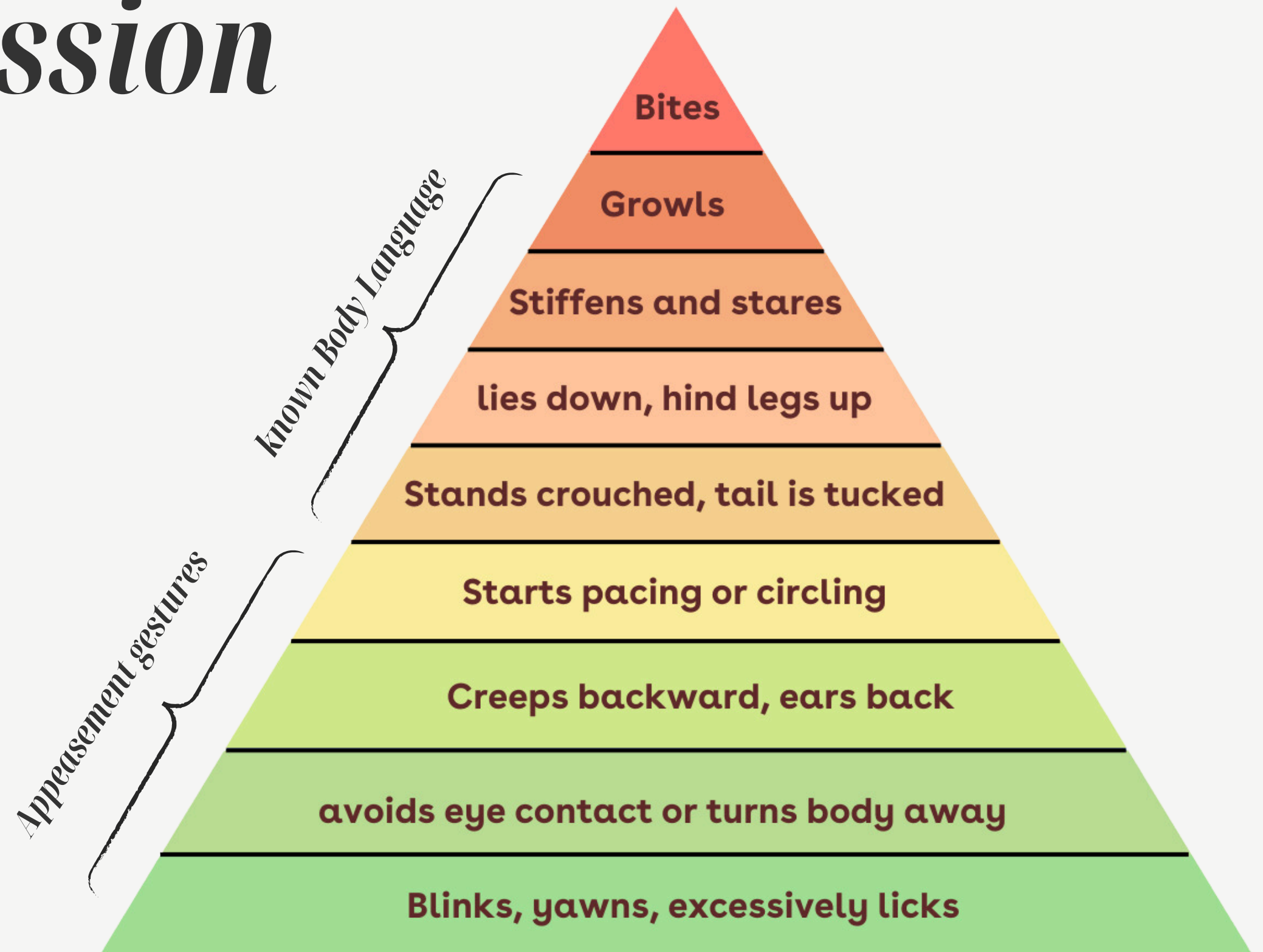
It's important to observe a dog's other body language as a whole, including posture and positioning of each body part, in addition to the surrounding environmental context. **Its important to take note of the whole picture to determine what is happening.**

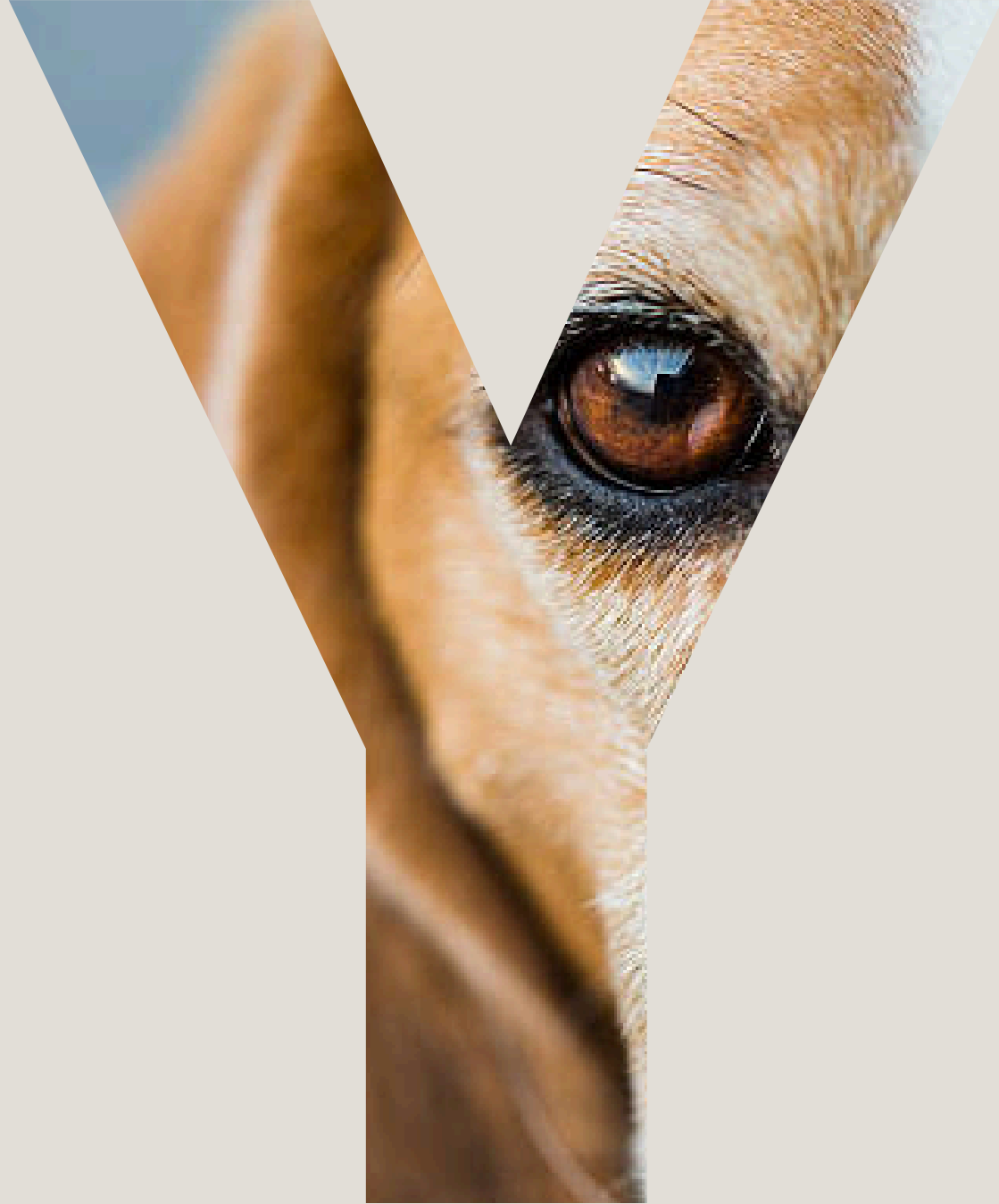
Dogs use many forms of body language to communicate with us and other animals. Their tails, eyes, face and ears can express different feelings, and so can their body position and even their hair.



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# Eyes

When looking at a dog's eyes, **You want to pay attention to the white part of the eye (the sclera) and consider the focus and intensity of the dog's gaze.** When a dog is feeling tense, their eyes may appear rounder than normal, or they may show a lot of white around the outside (sometimes known as a "whale eye".)

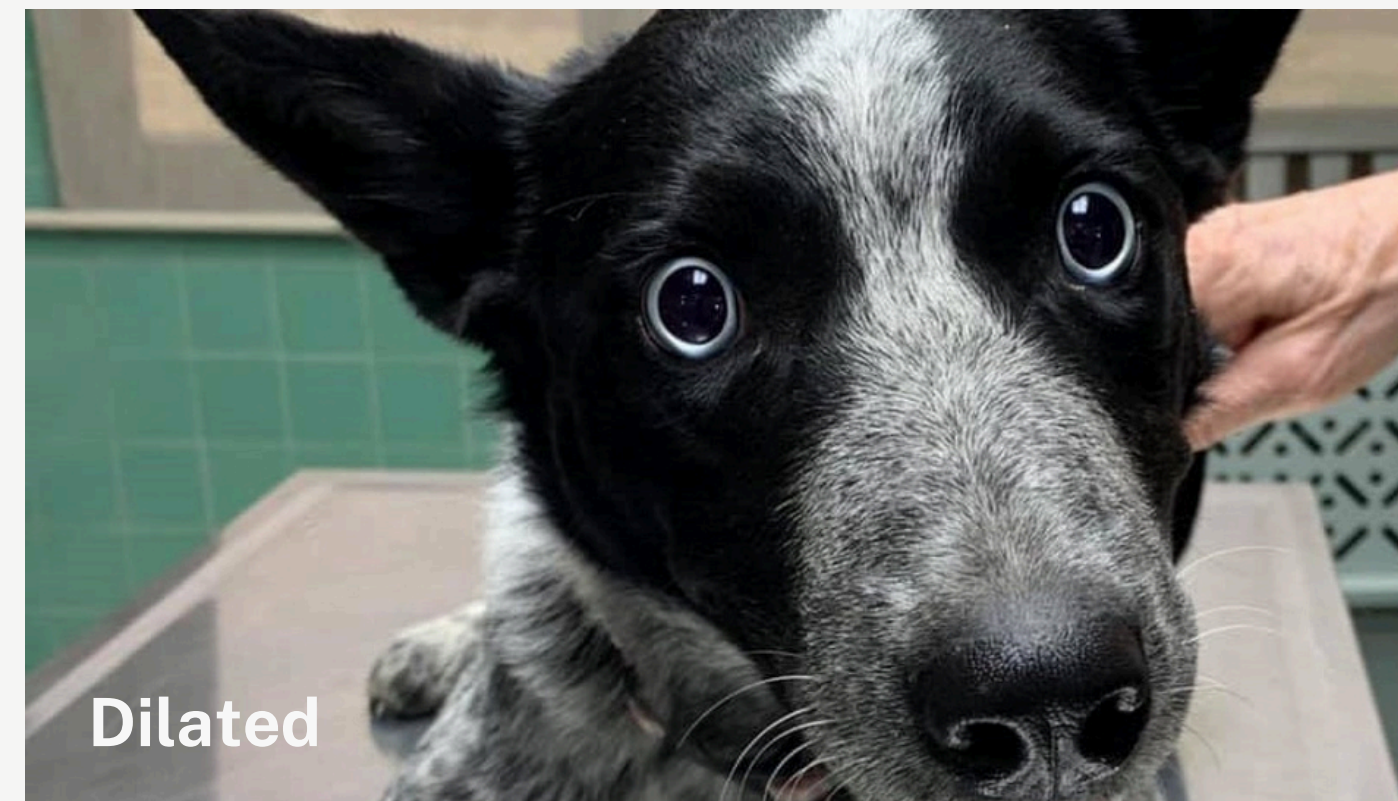
**Dilated pupils can also be a sign of fear or arousal** — these can make the eyes look "glassy," indicating that a dog is feeling threatened, stressed, or frightened.

A relaxed dog will often squint so that his eyes become almond-shaped with no white showing at all. The less white you see the better.

Whale Eyes



Dilated









# *Ears*



### Relaxed



If your dog has relaxed ears and a relaxed body, They feel confident and at peace with their environment. The muscular tissue of the face and body are also calm. They have no fear, and nothing is upsetting them.



### Perked up



If the dog has perked ears with a tense body this means your dog is listening intently or may feel intimidated. If the dog has a relaxed body, something they see or hear may have piqued their interest



### Back



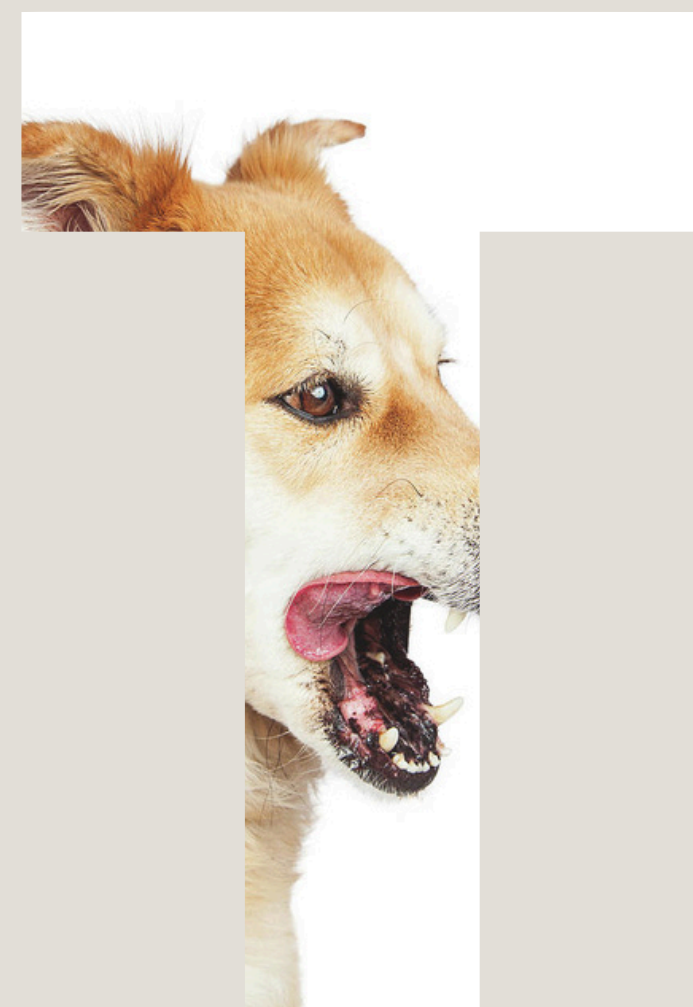
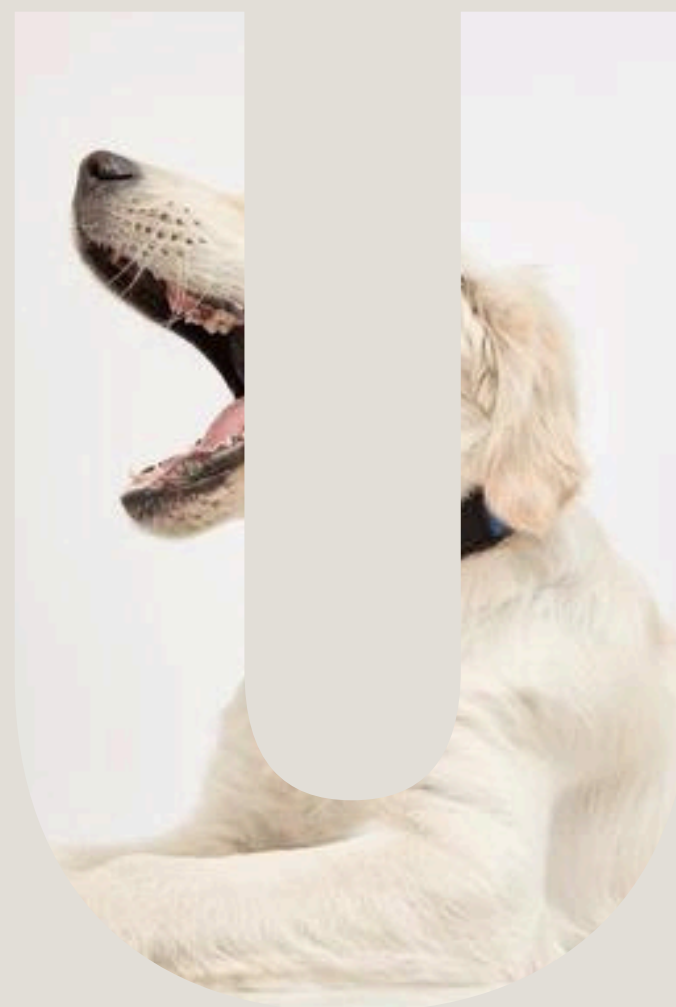
When a dog pulls their ears back tight or flattens them, it is usually a sign of stress. Ears flattened to their head means that the dog is demonstrating submissiveness. The posture could also be due to fear.



### Aggressive



A dog with pointed ears may be getting ready to defend themselves. It is a communication to the other pups that they are ready to fight if required.





# *Mouth*



## Relaxed



A relaxed dog will likely have his mouth open and may be panting, with no facial or mouth tension. The corners of his mouth may be turned upward slightly.



## Yawning/licking



Yawning and lip licking may be an early sign of stress, particularly when accompanied by a tight mouth and often a whining sound.



## Fearful/tense



A fearful or tense dog will generally keep his mouth closed and may pull his lips back at the corners.



## Aggressive



An aggressive dog may wrinkle the top of the muzzle, pull lips up vertically to display teeth. This warning often comes with a tense forehead, hard eyes and possibly but not also verbal cues like growling.





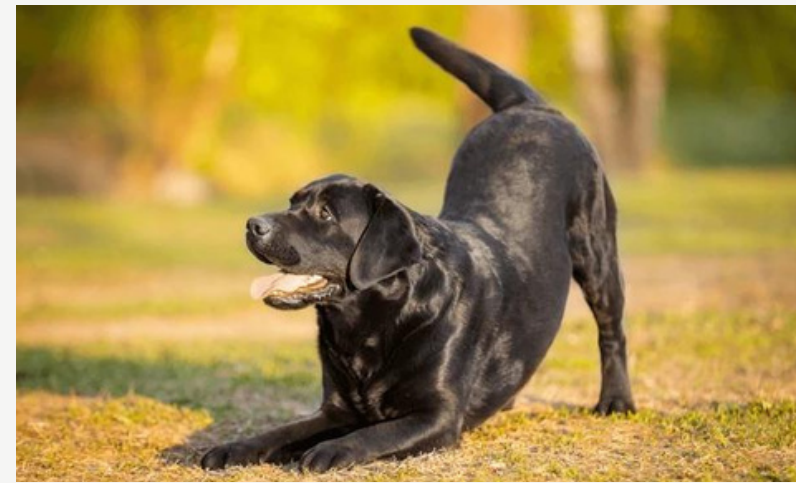
# *Body Posture*



## **Relaxed**



A relaxed and neutral dog will likely have a soft and relaxed body with no facial or mouth tension. Tail will be at a neutral level with slow and soft wags.



## **Playful**



When initiating play, dogs often start with a play bow and generally follow up with exaggerated facial and body movements. A playful dog's body movement will be loose and wiggly, with lots of movement and brief pauses during play.



## **Fearful**



A fearful dog may lean away, lean back, tremble, crouch, lower his body or head, or roll onto his side or back. Often, his eyes will often be fully open with large pupils, his forehead will be wrinkled, and his tail will be lowered or tucked.



## **Agitated**



A dog displaying aggressive body language will look large, standing with his head raised above his shoulders. His body will be tense, with weight either centered or over all four feet or leaning slightly forward onto the front legs.



# *Hackles — Piloerection*

While aggressive dogs do exhibit piloerection sometimes, it's not always a sign of aggression. **Piloerection in dogs is an involuntary reaction**, just like when humans get goosebumps.

A dog's hackles are supported by a unique set of muscles. **Dogs do not have control over these muscles as they are triggered by an involuntary reflex.** They are reactionary, meaning they are stimulated by the dog's nervous system.

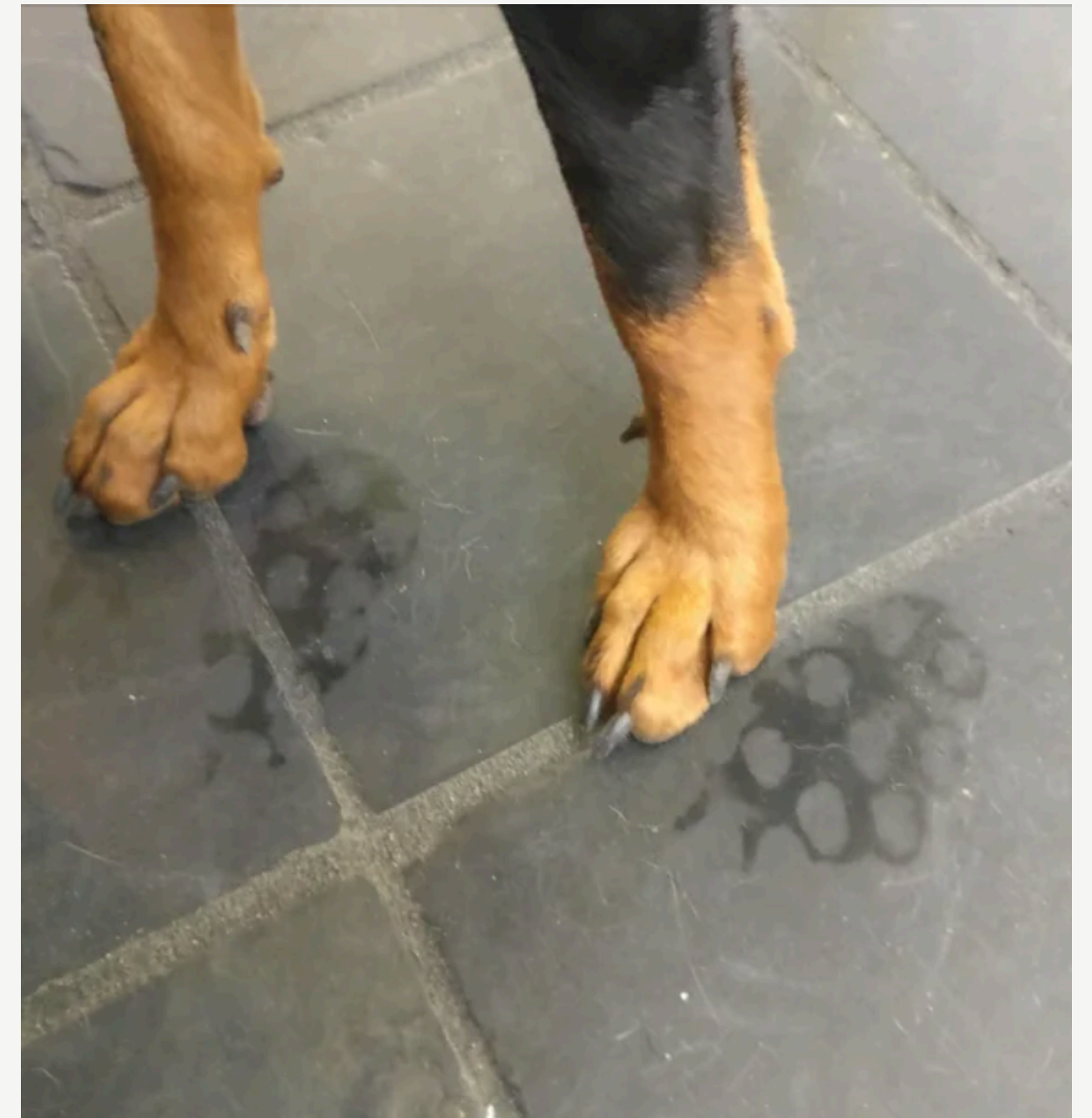
**Piloerection can be a sign of excitement, fear, anxiety or aggression.**



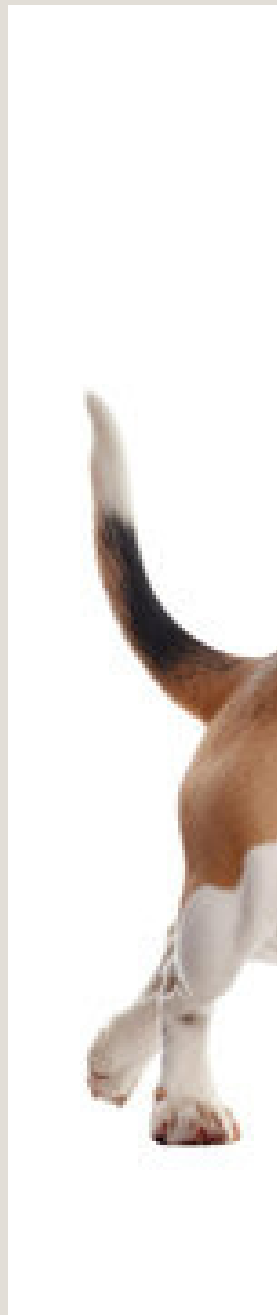
# *Sweating*

Dogs pant to cool themselves, but panting can also be a sign of stress, particularly rapid panting accompanied by a tight mouth with stress wrinkles around it.

Dogs also can sweat through their paws. You may notice a dog leaving wet footprints on the floor if they are particularly upset.







# *Tail positioning*

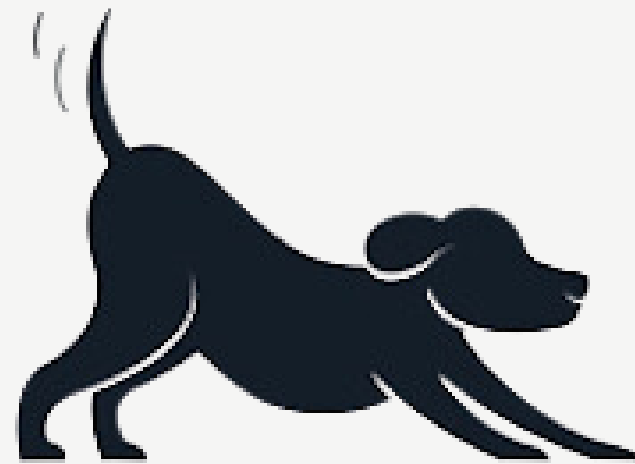
A dog's tail is a useful communication device, and you can learn what your dog is trying to tell you by their tail position. Keep in mind, that although every dog is different, the following are general descriptions of what each tail position means.

# *Tail positioning*



**Slightly raised tail with a big, widen or fast wags**

The dog is very happy and excited! They may be open to play, pets, and following you around.



**Wagging tail, mostly to the right**

The dog is friendly and ready to engage and play.



**Straight-out tail, horizontal and loose**

The dog is curious, and still deciding how they feel. They are likely sniffing and exploring too. Tail will likely be doing slow soft wags.



**Tail hanging down, relaxed with little wags**

The dog may be a little unsure and nervous about this situation. Slow movements and reassurance would be good. Allow the dog to come to you

# *Tail positioning*



## **Wagging tail, mostly to the left**

The dog is feeling afraid or concerned. This is causing them to feel anxious or intimidated and may need some space



## **Tail tucked between back legs, not moving**

The dog is concerned and scared. Allow the dog to come up to you but avoid any fast or sudden movements towards the dog.



## **Straight up tail**

The dog is on high alert. He may be excited but can also trigger easily. The dog is analyzing the situation closely so it's best to give the dog some space.



## **Stiff, tall tail, possibly arched with quick wags**

You need to back off. The dog is not happy and is likely ready to defend itself. The higher the tail the more assertive the dog

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