

Dog Behaviour Explained 4

10. Will behaviour problems resolve themselves with time?

Whilst puppies may grow out of some challenging behaviour, with the right guidance, most other behaviour problems will not resolve themselves and in fact are likely to get worse. If the dog is repeatedly put into situations he can't cope with and which provoke the unwanted behaviour as a means of managing the situation, that behaviour becomes learnt and the dog is more likely to repeat the behaviour, and increase it's intensity if necessary. Dogs can sensitise quickly to situations they find difficult and they can then generalise so the behaviour starts to be seen in other contexts. The earlier a problem is identified and treated the better the prognosis and the welfare of the dog.

11. Do you need to dominate your dog to get him to follow commands?

Positive reinforcement is the best technique to train a dog. This ensures the dog enjoys the training, understands what is wanted and is motivated to please their owner and themselves! Setting up win-win situations and making training sessions fun are the most rewarding and effective way of training dogs.

Using dominating, punitive or aversive techniques is both ethically wrong, unnecessary and can have serious consequences. Stressed or fearful dogs cannot learn, potentially making it less effective and it spoils the relationship between dog and handler. Setting win-lose scenarios where the dog is dominated can lead to fear and resentment and harsh, aggressive treatment of the dog can provoke the dog to respond aggressively.

12. Do dogs sweat if they get too hot?

Dogs can only sweat through their paws, which is ineffective for cooling down. They lose heat through panting and radiation (moving the blood and heat from deep in the body to close to the skin surface to be passed out into the environment). However, they will still find it harder to regulate their temperature than we do and can easily suffer from heatstroke.

To prevent heatstroke, avoid walking your dog in hot weather, never leave in a car and make sure they always have access to shade and water.

Next time, we will be answering:

Is obsessive behaviour funny?

When a dog has learnt a command at home, is he is just being naughty or wilful if he won't respond on walks?

Are dogs that eat grass sick?