

## **Dog Behaviour Explained**

### **13. Is obsessive behaviour funny?**

Repetitive behaviour may be either compulsive or stereotypic, and is a coping mechanism driven by either internal or external stress. It can be harmful to the dog by causing self injury or interfering with normal biological functioning (e.g. rest / sleep, eating, play etc) and always indicates a welfare concern. It indicates the dog is anxious and finding a situation difficult. Behaviour can be tail chasing, staring at lights / shadows, pacing, repetitive barking, pacing / running in circles, excessive grooming (including self-injury). The underlying causes of stress / anxiety and / or insufficient enrichment need to be determined and addressed to prevent further suffering.

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

Dogs genuinely do not generalise well. Learning a specific response and consequence to a command in one situation, does not automatically mean the dog will transfer this learning and respond in the same way in a different circumstance. Dogs should first be taught how you want them to respond in quiet, distraction free environments and once understood this can then start to be generalised to other places. Be prepared to start again from the beginning in different places (though it should be quicker second time round) and also to increase the value of the treats in more distracting situations. Always set the dog up for success by only asking for what you believe he will be able to achieve, so he can be rewarded, and managing more difficult situations initially until you can gradually work on his training being reliable in all situations.

### **15. Are dogs that eat grass sick?**

Many dogs eat grass and there can be several reasons for this. Sometimes they will eat grass to make themselves sick and sometimes they may eat grass to help them settle an upset stomach. They seem to know what they need and choose appropriate grass. However, many dogs will also eat grass when they are well, just because they like it – especially in spring and summer. Eating grass should not cause your dog any harm (be careful there are no slugs on it) but if your dog is repeatedly being sick or appears unwell in other ways, consult your vet.

### **Next time, we will be answering:**

Do dogs get separation anxiety because they love their owners too much?

Should you always practice taking the dogs food off him?

Are dogs are hunters?