



Warning Signs of Problem Behavior

Behavior problems are one of the most common reasons that pets are surrendered to shelters, given away to new owners, or in severe cases euthanized. There are many causes for each behavior problem and numerous ways to address and possibly stop each behavior. Unfortunately, many pet owners do not recognize there is a problem until it is too late. The key to addressing these behaviors is to identify the warning signs. Below is a short list of signs to help you recognize the beginning of some common types of problem behavior.

- ❁ After two or three weeks in their new home, your pup should have no trouble sleeping through the night. However, remember that puppies tend to wake up very early in the morning!
- ❁ It is not unusual for a puppy to be cautious around new people and situations. However, they should not be overly shy or timid.
- ❁ Your dog should never growl over food, toys, or favorite resting spots. This behavior is a sign of aggression and should never be confused with the attributes of a "guard dog".
- ❁ At no time is it acceptable for your dog to put his/her mouth or teeth on you! Although this is how puppies investigate their new surroundings, after 14 weeks of age they should no longer have the tendency to put their mouth/teeth on everything, *especially humans!*
- ❁ Regardless of your dogs age, size, breed, or history they should have very few, if any, accidents in the house six weeks after they have been in your home.
- ❁ Your dog should not be destructive! They should not tear up personal items, furniture, carpeting, or even their own toys.
- ❁ Uncontrolled urination when excited, startled, greeted, and/or disciplined should not last longer than 1-2 weeks after they have been in your home. **Never punish this behavior** as this can make the issue worse or create additional behavior problems.
- ❁ Watch for aggravated behavior. Digging, uncontrolled barking, whining, continuous licking or biting, and hyperactivity can be signs of a frustrated and/or bored animal.
- ❁ Eating non-food items can have serious medical consequences and should be addressed immediately.
- ❁ Something is going wrong with training if your puppy will not happily come to you when called most of the time.

If your pet is exhibiting any of the above behaviors, or if you have any other behavior questions or concerns, do not hesitate to seek professional help. Do not wait for your dog to "grow out of it". Modifying a certain undesirable situation before it turns into a problem behavior will save you a great deal of time and frustration and make your relationship with your pet more enjoyable.