

Animal Behavior Glossary

AGRESSION — This is a term we HATE within the shelter as it is often misused. It is dangerous and unfair to label an animal as aggressive when it is truly just misunderstood. **An aggressive animal is harmful to humans and other animals.** Many times, people misconstrue an animal's warning signals as aggressive behavior, when in fact the animal is doing everything it should be doing to prevent an altercation.

- **Offensive Aggression:** lunging, chasing, and moving toward the opponent. Dog's body postures make him appear larger and more intimidating: stiff body, raised hackles, tail straight up, ears are up and forward, direct eye contact or staring, teeth are bared and may be barking or growling.
- **Defensive Aggression:** Dog is protective or fearful. May hold his position or move away. Body is crouched, hair may be raised, usually not directly oriented towards the opponent. The tail is usually down, ears pinned back, and eye contact is often averted.

ANAL/GENITAL CHECKS — Dog sniffs/licks their own rear-end or genitals as an avoidance behavior.

ANXIETY — General term that refers to emotional arousal. Symptoms of anxiety: heavy panting/slobbering, pacing, whining, anorexia, defecating, destructive behavior, blood-shot eyes, dilated pupils, lip-licking, excessive shedding, trembling, and hiding to name a few.

CONFINEMENT DISTRESS — Animal becomes very distressed (crying, scratching) when confined to a very small space, like a crate.

DEMAND BARKING — Persistent and deliberate barking for attention, treats, toys, or anything fun. Demand barking is different than normal "alert" barking because the animal is using the bark to manipulate you into getting what they want: think of a toddler throwing a tantrum.

FEARFUL/SHY — Term we use in the shelter to describe animals who are frightened by new stimuli, loud noises, strangers, etc.

FERAL — Wild animal, cannot be touched, not socialized to humans at all.

FLOODING — when an animal is bombarded by stimuli (normally stressful stimulus), we DO NOT recommend you use flooding as a behavioral technique as it can lead to aversive behavior.

HEAD SHY — Animals who don't particularly care for their heads/ears being touched, this can make putting on a collar or harness particularly difficult. The animal may head-whip or become agitated when you approach or reach for their face.

HEAD-WHIP — quick motion of the dog's head, almost like a snap—but with no nipping—this motion is used to communicate "I don't like that!"

HOUSE-BREAKING — If an animal is not housebroken, they consistently have accidents in the house following their initial adjustment phase. We tell people to give an animal 1-2 weeks to become adjusted to his or her new environment and learn the new walk/bathroom schedule.

ISOLATION DISTRESS — Animal is visibly distressed when being left alone: whining, crying, pawing at the door, barking, chewing things when left alone in a room or crate (this is usually due to boredom). The behaviors stop when animal is not alone or has a companion like another dog or cat.

JUMPY/MOUTHY — This is a term we use within the shelter to describe dogs that like to jump up on people or other dogs for attention, these dogs will also often put their mouths on your arms with light pressure, or grab at clothes.

LONG-LIP/SHORT-LIP — When the dog's mouth is closed and the lips are pulled back almost in a grimace, it is often due to anxiety or fear. Short-Lip, or when the dog draws the corners of its mouth towards the front of the mouth usually connotes the animal is tense and may be a precursor to snapping.

POSTURING — Body is forward, ears perked, tail up, animal is making themselves appear larger. Usually their center of gravity is shifted forward.

SEPARATION ANXIETY — Animal panics when left alone: chews through crate/door, jumping out windows, chewing on themselves (paws, tail, etc), inappropriate defecation or urination, anorexia (ignores high-value treats like kongs); when the dog is not left alone they most likely exhibit shadowing behaviors (following their person around.) The dog will also become anxious when it notices you are about to leave because he can pick up on cues that you are about to depart, like grabbing your keys or putting on your shoes.

****An animal diagnosed with separation anxiety has a poor quality of life and needs immediate intervention including; behavioral modification and medication management. A symptom of separation anxiety is commonly extreme generalized anxiety. The dog is always looking for signs that you are about to leave them and becomes hypervigilant.****

SEPARATION DISTRESS — hyper-attachment to a human without panic; low-level anxiety. Think of the Chihuahua who sits in your lap constantly, follows you to the bathroom, and wants to be touching you at all times. We call these "Velcro-dogs".

SHUT DOWN — When an animal is so stressed they completely shut down and do not respond to any stimulus; they often will not eat or respond to touch.

SUBMISSIVE/DOMINANT — We don't use these labels within the shelter because they don't apply to domesticated dogs. Please don't use these terms; instead we prefer you use objective terms to describe the animal's behavior (barking, lunging, showing teeth, posturing, rolling-over, crouching, short-lip, tapping out)

TAP-OUT — Dog rolls over, stays belly-up, and may seem anxious; this is often an "avoidance" behavior.