



Fearful/ Shy Dogs

Fear of People

The goal with fearful dogs is to show the dog that humans are a valuable resource and directly provide for his needs.

1. Bring the dog his food every day on a regular schedule, so the dog realizes that food appears at a particular time each day. You also want to remove the food bowl each day after a period of time (20-30 minutes).
2. Watch to see if he will eat in your presence. If he doesn't, give him some time to get used to you being nearby. Then you can work up to hand feeding him to build trust.

Effective use of Space

You can use space to help a shy or feral dog become less fearful around people. To increase the dog's opportunities for positive experiences with people:

- Don't focus on the dog: don't talk to him, look at him, or attempt to pet him before he is ready.
- Be prepared to reward the dog for behaviors you would like to encourage, such as making eye contact with you, moving closer to you or wagging his tail. Soft, smelly treats like hot dogs are good to use. These can change the dog's state of mind from "you're scary", to "I really want that treat".

Management

1. Allow the dog to approach people on his own, rather than forcing him to tolerate someone.
2. Give the dog a routine; structure helps a dog feel more comfortable. For instance, have a set schedule for his meals, giving him walks, sitting with him to toss treats, handling and petting him (when he is ready).
3. Teach the dog simple behaviors to ask for things that he wants, whether it's the chance to go outdoors, or to be given his food bowl or a chew toy. This is a way to build a dog's confidence and develop a good working relationship with him, which helps reduce tensions and anxieties that may arise because of a dog's uncertainties.

Fear of Loud Noises

Many dogs have a fear of loud sounds, such as thunder and fireworks. Often, a dog will try to run from a frightening sound or can become destructive trying to escape.

If you do not help to calm your dog's fear, he may injure himself, run away, or destroy items in your home in his desperation to get away from the fearful noise.

Storms

If you know that a storm is coming, turn on some music or your TV to muffle the sound of the thunder. Create a safe place in your home for the dog. Let your dog show you where: If he goes to a favorite spot, make a nice bed there. Encourage him to rest there with you and, if he does relax, offer him a food-filled Kong or bone.

Be careful putting a frightened dog in a crate and leave. Though his crate may normally be a safe place for him, he may feel trapped in there if he's frightened during a storm. He could injure himself badly trying to get out of the crate.

As the thunder gets louder, he may not be able to stay relaxed with his treat. You can try to play a favorite game with him or hand-feed him a really special treat.

If your dog's fear is not extreme, you may want to try behavior modification. Here's how it works: Get a recording of storm sounds (or whatever the offending noise is) and play it at very low volume while you engage your dog in activities he likes. You can play games with him, groom him, hand-feed him, or practice cues he knows in return for treats. If he is fine with that volume, practice the next day with the volume turned up a bit. Continue raising the volume a little each day as you involve him in pleasurable activities. This method gradually desensitizes the dog and, over time, he finds the noise less fearful.

Safety

It is important to make sure that everyone is safe in case a fearful situation is encountered. Always check to make sure that your dog's collar is tight enough or look into getting a martingale collar or harness to prevent your dog from pulling out of the collar and running away.

Have up to date information on tags and microchip to ensure that if your dog gets loose, he can make it back to you.

Also, remember that you are your dog's biggest advocate, so it is up to you to remove your dog from potentially frightening or dangerous situations before things escalate. If you see your dog become nervous (drooling, panting, curled body posture, etc) it is probably time to remove him.