



HUMANE LEAGUE
OF LANCASTER COUNTY

Understanding and Managing Dog Behavior

Channeling Mental and Physical Energy

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Many of the most frequent problems patrons experience with their pets stem from a lack of adequate and appropriate outlets for natural energy. Sometimes a patron will find it difficult to see the connection between the dog or puppy's problem (from the patron's perspective) and natural energy levels. Energy outlet issues are commonly associated with complaints including:

- Destruction
- Jumping up
- Mouthy and/or nipping behavior
- Chasing
- Escaping
- Nuisance barking
- Difficulty with leash control
- Inappropriate play with other pets

There are a variety of possible diagnoses and appropriate recommendations for each of these problems, and any one given case may include more than one of each. In many cases, ONE of the diagnoses will be social isolation, play, or investigative behavior. Recommendations for those diagnoses all include methods to discourage the inappropriate behavior and to teach appropriate replacement behavior. In addition, you will find that those lists of recommendations include increased outlets for mental and physical energy, including:

Implement "Nothing In Life Is Free". Sits, down, come, and stay commands should be taught using positive reinforcement such as food, praise, and petting. Nothing in Life Is Free can also increase confidence by enhancing the structure of a dog's life.

Enroll the dog in an obedience class and work with her consistently.

Provide more frequent and more consistent opportunities for interactive play, exercise, and social activities with the patron when the dog is behaving acceptably—NOT when the dog demands it and NOT immediately before leaving the dog alone (with could worsen a mild case of separation anxiety).

Enlarge the dog's world by expanding her environment. Take walks along different routes and encourage exploration (on leash, with people). Use of a head halter may make this possible.

Modify the environment to be more interesting, including the presence of appropriate busy toys; rotate toys weekly.

If the problem is occurring outdoors, give the dog more indoor time with lots of distracting, positive things to do.

Give the dog more indoor time with PEOPLE.

Especially while working on the cause of the problem, try to break up the dog's day into smaller sections. Enlist friends and neighbors to visit and give them suggestions for low key arrivals/departures and interactive play. When appropriate, try "doggie day care" a few days a week.

THEREFORE: Successful resolution of the most common dog behavior problems will include the COMINATION of three vital aspects of behavior modification: discourage the inappropriate behavior, teach appropriate replacement behavior, and provide adequate, appropriate outlets for mental and physical energy.

In this chapter, you will find some examples of each recommendation. However, the recommendations can only act as 'starting places', since each dog has individual needs. You can sometimes customize the advice you give to a patron based on the dog.

Factors of Genetics

Species
Breed Type
Bloodline
Individual
Gender
Age

Factors of Experience

Learning
Socialization
Developmental Level
Psychological Trauma
Physical Trauma
Health Status

Each of these factors contribute to the behavior and needs of an individual animal. The primary factors to consider when determining the energy level needs of a puppy or dog are age, breed-type, level of development, health status, and general experiences. the significance of health status is obvious, since an animal who does not feel well will display a reduced energy level. a dog who has not had adequate experiences or opportunities for appropriate energy outlets will display an