



TREAT AND RETREAT FOR FEARFUL DOGS

WHAT IS TREAT AND RETREAT?

Treat and Retreat is a method for building rapport with fearful or defensive dogs. The process involves using food and space to encourage interaction that the dog is comfortable with. Food is not used to lure the dog closer to us, because this often creates internal conflict in a fearful dog. Instead, food is used to encourage space and breaks by tossing treats away from us.



WHY USE TREAT AND RETREAT?

This game gives us a way to bond with our dog while creating a strong positive association with human interaction. By tossing the treats away, your dog learns to take space when scared, which actually helps them calm down. Over time, increasing your dog's ability to choose to take breaks lessens your dog's fear.

WHY NOT HAND-FEED TREATS?

Hand feeding treats to a fearful dog sets the dog up for continued exposure to stress hormones. By requiring your dog to remain close to the scary thing, they may feel coerced. That's why hand feeding can increase fear and aggression.

HOW TO TEACH IT

- Step 1.** Prepare pea-sized high-value treats. Preferably something stinky that your dog loves!
- Step 2.** Using an underhand toss, gently throw a treat away from you and past the dog.
- Step 3.** Remain relaxed and calm while the dog eats the treat.
- Step 4.** Once they've finished eating, gently toss another treat - this time closer to you. Step 5. Repeat the above steps, varying the distance and direction of your tosses.

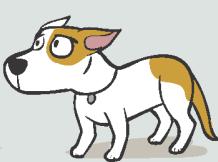
TRAINING TIPS

- Tip 1.** Body language is everything! Avoid staring directly at the dog. Soften your gaze, blink slowly, and look slightly off to the side or at the dog's feet. Relax your body and turn so that your side faces the dog while still keeping the dog within your line of sight.
- Tip 2.** You may notice the dog approaching after eating the treats. That's just what you want to see! It means they're getting more comfortable with you. Continue alternating treat tosses. Resist the temptation to offer treats from your hand.
- Tip 3.** If the dog is not moving towards or eating the treat, then try using something that's higher value - the stinkier the better. You may also try releasing a handful of treats on each toss, or moving to a space with more space and perceived exit routes for the dog.
- Tip 4.** If a dog is lying on their bed and not following tossed treats you may gently place treats on the bed in front of the dog, but do not linger near their bed. Step back and let them eat.

Body Language of Fear in Dogs



Slight Cowering



Major Cowering

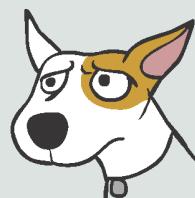
More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



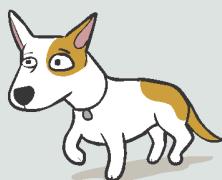
Licking Lips
when no food nearby



Panting
when not hot or thirsty



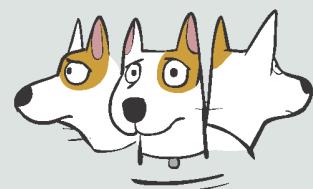
Brows Furrowed, Ears to Side



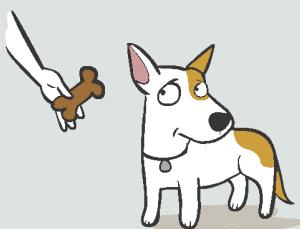
Moving in Slow Motion
walking slow on floor



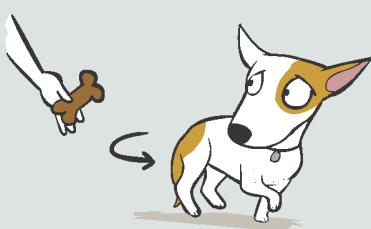
Acting Sleepy or Yawning
when they shouldn't be tired



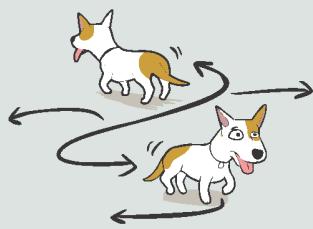
Hypervigilant
looking in many directions



Suddenly Won't Eat
but was hungry earlier



Moving Away



Pacing

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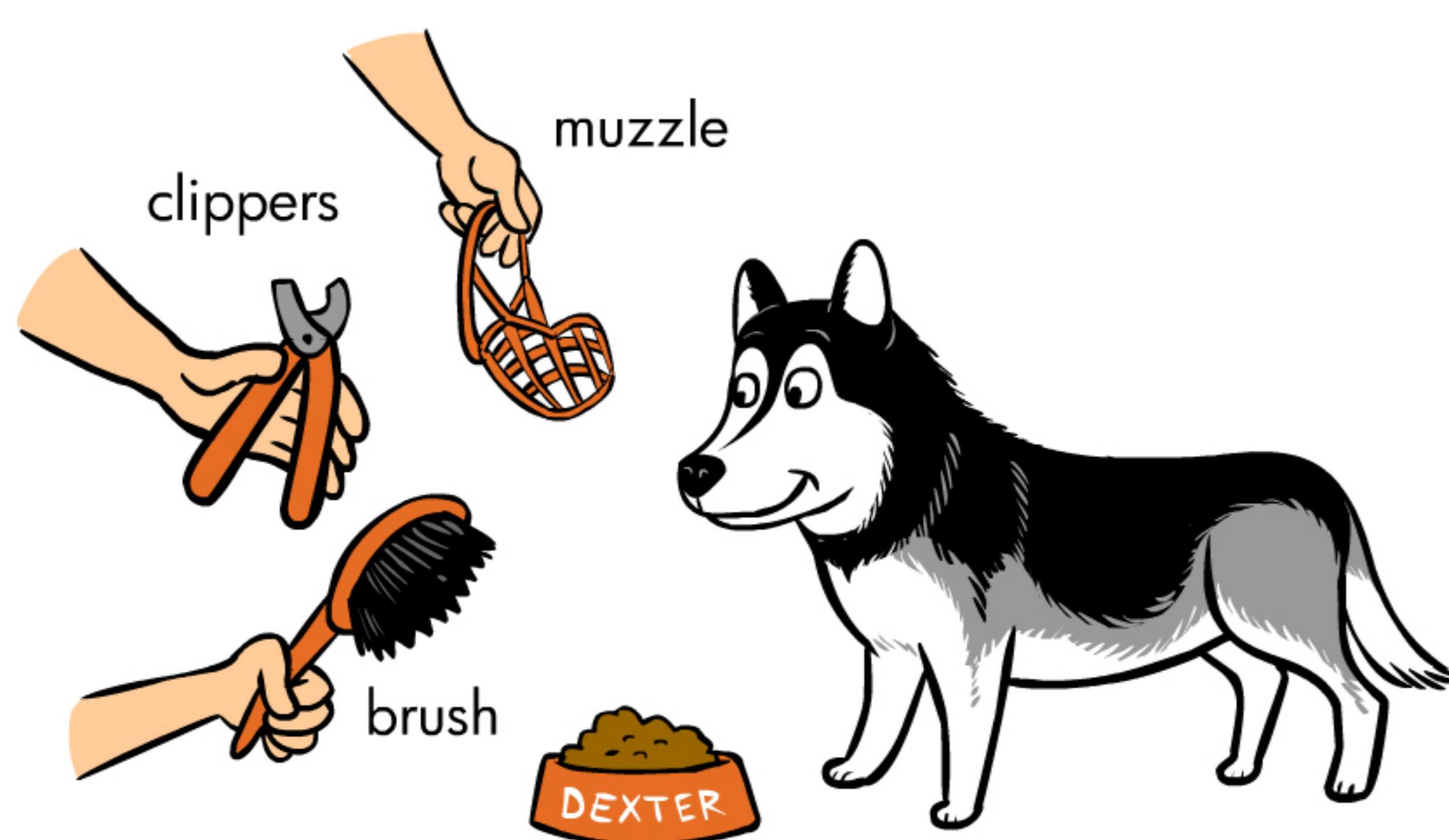


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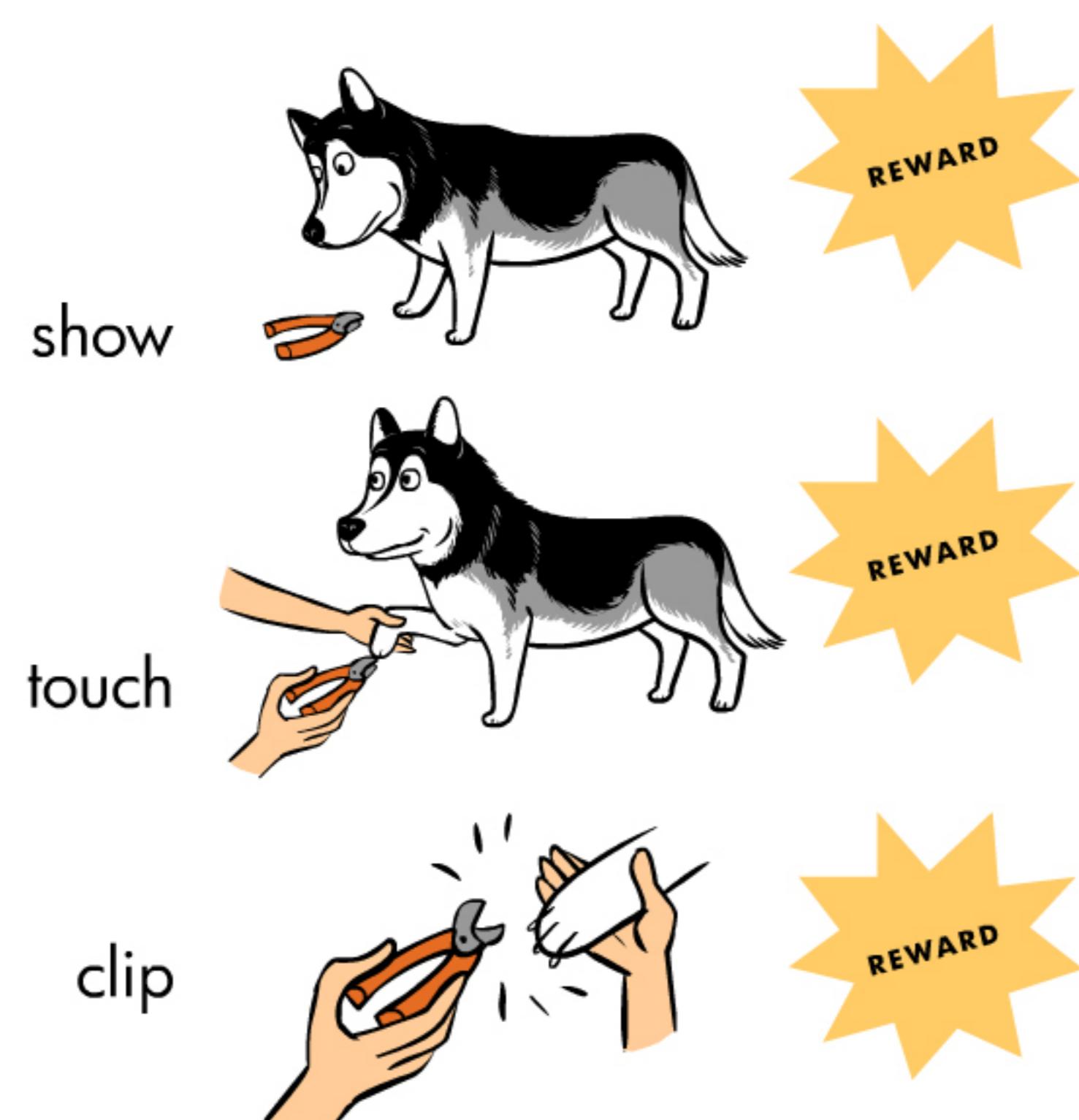


6 TOP TIPS for DESENSITISATION

Turn scary things into fun, positive experiences!



- 1** Show the scary object just before feeding for at least a week, so the dog learns it becomes a precursor to good things.



- 3** Break down the scary thing into a process of small steps (IE putting the clippers near the dogs claws, then touching the claws, then holding the claw in the clippers then cutting), praising and rewarding heavily for each step.



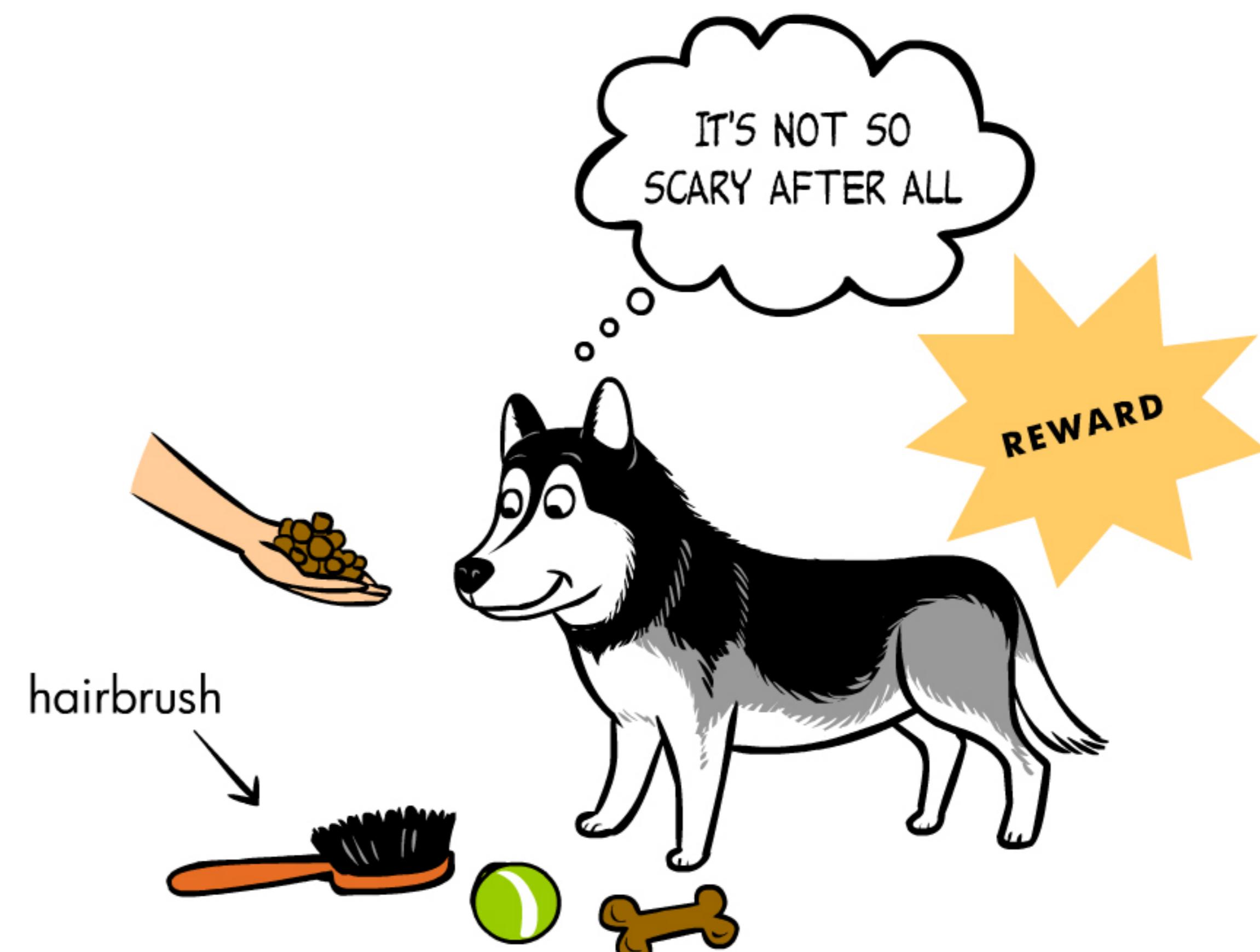
- 5** If your dog seems unhappy or sensitive to the scary object at any time, go back a step and spend more time on that step.



- 2** Start with short moments of exposure followed by good things only (IE don't clip their claws, give 3 liver treats instead)



- 4** Be patient, proceeding to the next small step only when your dog is 100% comfortable



- 6** If your dog is scared of several things, work on one at a time maintaining a happy voice, rewarding with lots of treats and remaining patient.

JezRose
canine behaviour specialist

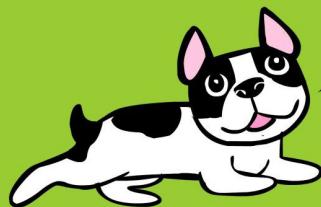
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For further resources and information on dog training and behaviour, see www.JezRose.co.uk

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CALM and RELAXED? or SHUT DOWN?

Calm, attentive, responsive



Lying down,
TAKING A BREAK



Soft faces and bodies, wiggly



Lying down,
OFFERING belly,
soft and wiggly
body



Responding to handler
and environment,
free and easy
body movement

Frozen, unresponsive



Tucked in, staying very still

Help.
Need space

Lying down,
OVERWHELMED
("Flooded")



Tense face and body

Tense



Staying very STILL,
guarded posture

Tail tucked



Overwhelmed,
unresponsive and
avoidant

Body Language References

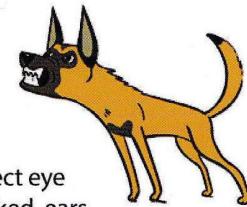
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THE SPECTRUM OF FEAR, ANXIETY & STRESS

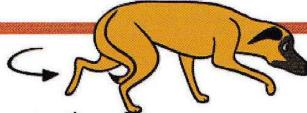
RED: SEVERE SIGNS - FIGHT/AGGRESSION (FAS 5)

- Offensive Aggression - lunging forward, ears forward, tail up, hair may be up on the shoulders, rump, and tail, showing only the front teeth, lip pucker - lips pulled forward, tongue tight and thin, pupils possibly dilated or constricted.
- Defensive Aggression - hair may be up on the back and rump, dilated pupils, direct eye contact, showing all teeth including molars, body crouched and retreating, tail tucked, ears back.



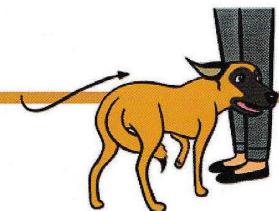
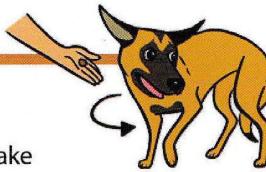
RED: SEVERE SIGNS - FLIGHT/FREEZE/FRET (FAS 4)

- Flight - ears back, tail tucked, actively trying to escape - slinking away or running, mouth closed or excessive panting - tongue tight instead of loose out of mouth, showing whites of eyes, brow furrowed, pupils dilated.
- Freeze/Fret - tonic immobility, pupils dilated, increased respiratory rate, trembling, tense closed mouth, ears back, tail tucked, body hunched.



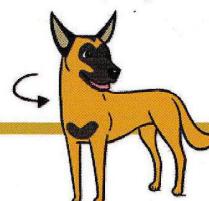
YELLOW: MODERATE SIGNS (FAS 3)

- Similar to FAS 2 but turning head away, may refuse treats for brief moments or take treats roughly, may be hesitant to interact but not completely avoiding interaction.



YELLOW: MODERATE SIGNS (FAS 2)

- Ears slightly back or to the side, tail down but not necessarily completely tucked, furrowed brow, slow movements or unable to settle, fidgeting, attention seeking to owner, panting with a tighter mouth, moderate pupil dilation.



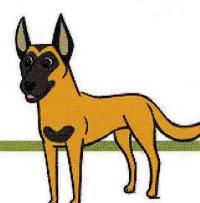
GREEN: MILD/SUBTLE SIGNS (FAS 1)

- Tail up higher, looking directly, mouth closed, eyes more intense, more pupil dilation, brow tense, hair may be just slightly up on the back and tail, may be expectant and excited or highly aroused.



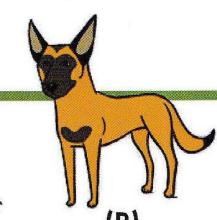
GREEN: ALERT/EXCITED/ANXIOUS? (FAS 0-1)

- Looking directly but not intensely, tail up slightly, mouth open slightly but lips loose, ears perked forward, slight pupil dilation.



GREEN: PERKED/INTERESTED/ANXIOUS? (FAS 0-1)

- Looking directly but not intensely, tail up slightly, mouth open slightly but loose lips, ears perked forward, slight pupil dilation.

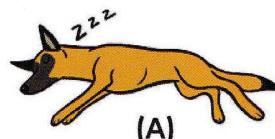


GREEN: RELAXED (FAS 0)

A: Sleeping.

B: Neutral - ears in neutral position, not perked forward, brow soft, eyes soft, mouth closed but lips relaxed, body loose, tail carriage neutral, pupils normal dilation.

C: Friendly greeting - slow back and forth tail and butt wag, ears just slightly back, relaxed brow and eyes, may have mouth slightly open with relaxed lips and loose tongue.



(A)

(B)

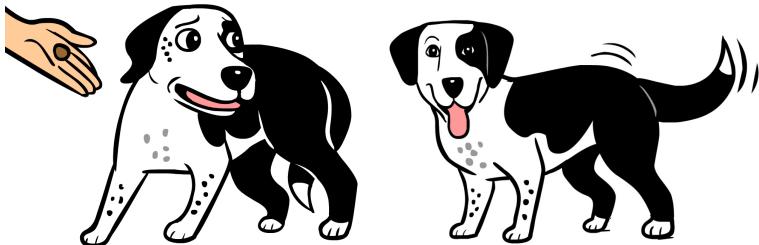


(C)



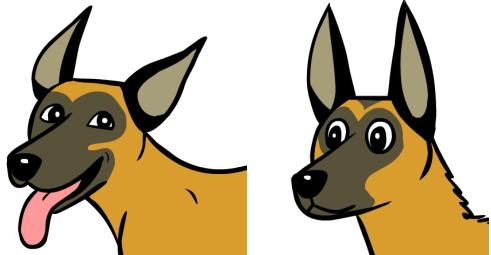
8 Key Points of Observation

1. Overall body posture



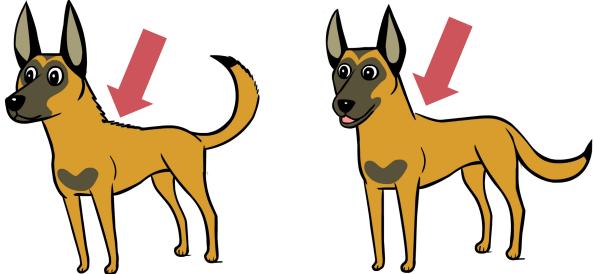
Loose and wiggly or tense and stiff? Upright or crouched? Leaning toward or away?

5. Mouth



Open or closed? Loose or tense? Teeth showing? Panting? Lip licking?

2. Hair coat



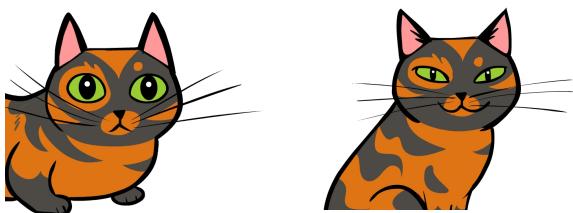
Standing on end or lying normally against the body?

6. Tail



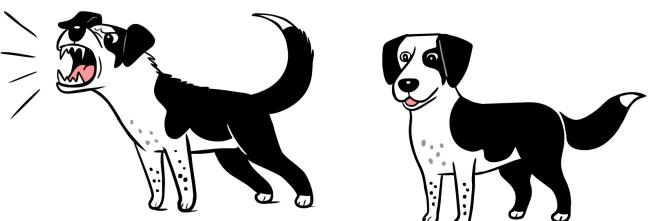
Tightly tucked or held away? If wagging, stiffly or loosely—high/low?

3. Eyes



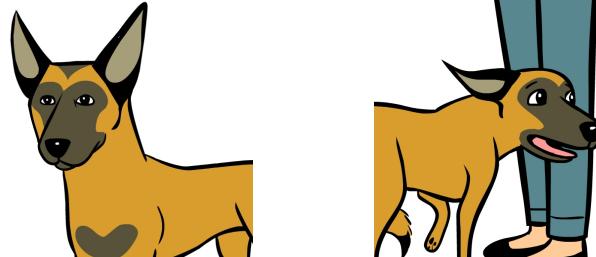
Looking at or away? Pupil size? Eyes wide or squinty? Hard stare or soft gaze?

7. Vocalizing?



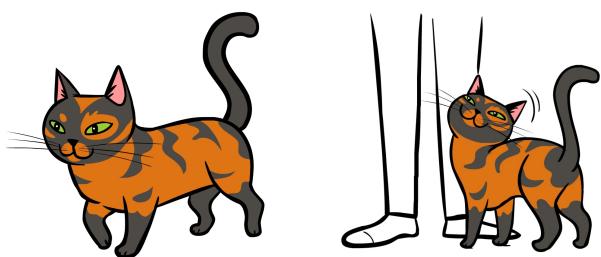
High- or low-pitched bark? Whine? Growl? Hiss, yowl, meow, purr?

4. Ears



Flattened down or held naturally? Forward, sideways, or neutral position?

8. Animal in Context



What's the situation? Seeking or avoiding contact? Specific stressors?