

DOGS

SHY OR FEARFUL DOGS



**HUMANE
RESCUE
ALLIANCE**
Animals. People. Community.

What does a shy or fearful dog look like?

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



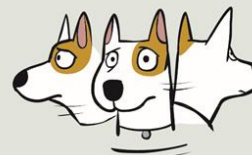
Brows Furrowed, Ears to Side



Moving in Slow Motion
walking slow on floor



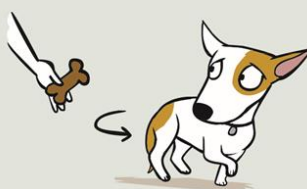
Acting Sleepy or Yawning
when they shouldn't be tired



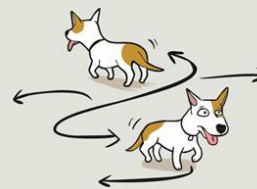
Hypervigilant
looking in many directions



Suddenly Won't Eat
but was hungry earlier



Moving Away



Pacing

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The Art and Science of Animal Behavior

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Shy and fearful dogs can show their feelings in a number of ways. Some might cower, roll onto their back, shake, urinate, hide, duck, back away, or stay still. But other shy or fearful dogs have learned that growling, snarling, or barking will result in the thing that is scaring them moving away.

Causes of shyness and fear

Some dogs might just be shy, in general. But others have specific things that give them fear. Examples of these potential causes of shyness or fear are:

- new people
- categories of people like men, or children.
- all new situations, like visiting a friend's house, traveling in a new car, etc
- specific situations like the vet's office or large crowds of people
- sounds, whether sudden or loud, the vacuum, or children screaming

Why is a shy dog shy or fearful?

Some dogs are just genetically predisposed to be shy. Mom was shy, grandpa was shy, shyness runs in the family. In others, shyness, or fear of particular things or people is a result of a bad past experience.

However, in the majority of cases, signs of fear or shyness are a result of under-socialization. Meaning, your dog just has not had enough real-world experience with the things that are causing the fearful and shy behavior. For example, a dog who grew up in a quiet neighborhood with houses and yards and who now lives in an urban, busy environment has lots of new things of which to be scared!

What can I do?

Be understanding and patient. Don't push your dog into encounters he is uncomfortable with or not ready for. This could make matters worse.

- Carry treats with you when you can, and dish them out whenever your dog sees something frightening. Cheer him on, and keep the encounters brief.
- Take your dog to classes and work regularly on his training at home. Keep training positive and upbeat, a fun activity.
- Help build your dog's confidence by teaching games and tricks.
- **Talk to us** if your dog growls, snaps, or lunges at people or other dogs, if his shyness gets worse, or if he spends a lot of time shaking or hiding. This is a poor quality of life and we want to help you minimize this!

Will it get better?

Most shy dogs can become more confident over time, but don't expect too much too soon. The process is slow and gradual.