

Medical Influences on Behavior

While it is true that most changes in a dog's behavior are the result of either a fear response or a learned behavior, there are a many medical conditions that may cause sudden, dramatic behavior changes.

If you see a sudden, dramatic change in your dog's behavior, it might be considered that he/she be thoroughly examined by a veterinarian to determine if there is an underlying medical condition. Some common medical conditions that may present with behavioral problems include skin infections, viral/bacterial infections, Lyme disease, tumors, seizures, stroke, physical traumas, pregnancy or false pregnancy, diabetes/pre-diabetes, gastric conditions, onset of visual or hearing problems, hair over eyes, anal gland impaction/infection/constipation, arthritis, hip dysplasia or other degenerative disorders, spinal/joint/ligament injuries, dental conditions, ear infections, pancreatitis, genital/urinary tract infections, hyperkinesia, and food/contact/vaccination allergies.

Some of the behavior changes that may result from these medical problems include aggression (biting, offensive/defensive barking, fighting, growling, mounting, overprotectiveness), attention deficit disorders, chewing, digging, eating disorders, food guarding, escaping, fear/shyness phobias, fly-snapping, housesoiling, hyperactivity/restlessness, scooting, mood swings and self-mutilation (lick/chew/scratch/chasing tail).

While behavioral modification/intervention may temporarily solve the behavior problem, if it reoccurs, a search for a possible underlying medical condition should be pursued.

The Humane Society offers three Puppy & Dog Training Classes each week—Wednesday at 11 AM, Thursday at 7 PM and Saturday at 1 PM. The class is a 6-week session; each once-a-week class is about 1 hour. For information contact Connie at 772-388-3331, Ext. 19.