

Sierra Animal Wellness Center

Specializing in Holistic, Integrative Veterinary
Medicine



October 5, 2017



Leash Reactivity and Aggression

It's National Walk Your Dog Week! Get outdoors with your beloved dog and enjoy not only the health benefits and opportunities to meet new friends, but the beauty and wonderful weather of this time of year. Sounds great, right? And it is!

Unless your dog suffers from leash lunging, leash reactivity or leash aggression. However it presents itself it takes the fun out of walks and increases tension for both you and your dog. While the reasons can vary, most experts agree these behaviors are rooted in fear. There may also be a biological cause of leash reactivity. In the past it has been believed that testosterone was the culprit, but ongoing research is looking at other hormones that may trigger a variety of behaviors, including leash reactivity. We'll keep you posted as new research emerges.

Simple leash pulling is a different issue often related to your pup's desire to sniff and is usually an easy problem to solve in a way that makes both you and your pup happy. For some good tips from Dogster, [click here](#).



Leash reactivity is a more serious issue. Whatever the cause, there are steps you can take and it all begins with a good foundation of basic obedience skills. Obedience training will not only improve your pup's behavior, but also your ability to communicate more effectively with your dog, an especially useful skill in stressful situations. Positive techniques set your dog up for success and reinforce desired behavior. For detailed training tips dealing specifically with leash lunging/reactivity/aggression, there are a number of resources on the web. We especially like this excellent article from Victoria Stilwell. [Just click here](#). It is also important to practice loose leash walking. A tight leash can make a dog feel as if there is no escape from a frightening situation, so during training, concentrate on keeping some slack in the leash.

Keep training fun. No matter what training technique you use, fun and play should be part of the process. Treats and toys are great training tools to lure your dog's attention from other dogs or people and then reward him for cooperating with you. Do not punish a dog that lunges on the leash for any reason, especially if the cause of the behavior is insecurity, which is the case for most dogs. Correcting a fearful dog can cause more anxiety. Your goal is to build a relationship with your dog so that you have his confidence and trust. Then he will look to you for guidance when another dog approaches instead of trying to go on the attack.

Fear and anxiety can make your canine friend respond in frightening ways. If there is a safety concern for you, your dog, other animals, or other people, avoid walking your dog and contact a qualified trainer or behavior specialist for assistance. Feel free to call the clinic and we can give you

some local recommendations. You can reach us at (530) 346-6611.

Until next time, be well.

- Dr. Peggy

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Clinic Hours

Monday, Thursday and Friday
from 9:00 to 6:00

Tuesday from 9:00 to 3:00

Wednesday from 12:00 to 6:00

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