# READING DOG BODY LANGUAGE
This dog is under extreme stress.
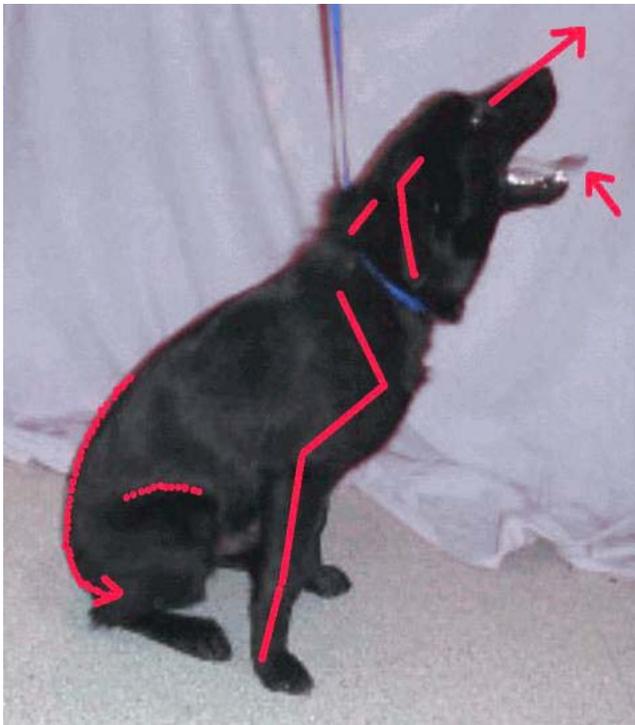
Looking to handler for reassurance.

Ears back and down, pinned flat against neck. Wide open mouth, lips drawn back, rapid respiration.

Center of gravity forward, shoulders lowered, hunched forward. Tail tucked, tension in haunches, probably trembling.

How to greet this dog: Stand sideways, using calming signals - yawn, deep sigh, pick at the floor (imitates sniffing) will help her relax and feel safer.

Avoid stroking and cooing "it's ok, it's alright." Excess adrenalin results in suppressed appetite; the dog will be able to take food when her stress level comes down.

Calming signals, appeasement

Body curved in C-shape

Head lowered and turned away, nose down

Ears lowered but relaxed

Tenseness over eyebrows

Eyes squinted but soft, blinking

Lips soft

Nose, lip lick

Body weight shifted, paw probably raised

This dog is trying to appear as non-threatening as possible, his goal is to diffuse any aggression from approaching person or animal in a totally passive way. By using appropriate body language and calming signals, you could easily let this dog know that you are non-threatening and ease his tension. Don't loom, hover or stare. Get low, turn sideways, use soft eye and quiet voice.

Avoidance - aggressive response likely if approached too quickly or cornered.

Dog is in C-shape, looking away, but head is lifted slightly, pupils dilated in a frozen stare, watching with peripheral vision.

Center of gravity is toward oncoming"threat"

Ears back and lowered, tail low.

Lips are forward and in tense line.

Tenseness over muzzle, whiskers erect.

Tenseness in the haunches.

"Frozen" defense (freeze, fight or flight)

While this dog is not looking for a fight, it is likely that if reached for suddenly, it would react in self defense with a rapid, probably inhibited, series of fast bites.

"La-la-la-la I don't see you."

Note: this dog is not looking to a person for reassurance, he's looking at the wall - trying to be invisible.

Nose up, ears back.

Whale eye stare.

Lips drawn back. (fear)

Flight would be his first choice, but he is cornered by being on leash and against a wall.

This pup has also flattened himself against the wall, this time in a more actively self-defensive posture.

Ears back, whale eye, focused on person holding his leash.

Lips are tight, whiskers forward.

Tail is up, not tucked - he is probably just as stressed but is more confident/aroused than the previous pup.

The previous pup would probably hurt HIMSELF trying to get away, this pup might hurt YOU.

Beware the cornered dog. You must always leave an escape route.

Pup A.
Head is lowered, whale eye, ears back. Backed into corner, lips tight and forward. Shoulders lowered, weight shifted to left, looking for escape route.

Pup B.
Chin up, pupils dilated. Ears back & down, tightness over muzzle, lips forward, whiskers erect. Backed into a corner, legs braced. Direct stare, prepared defend self. Which is more likely bite?

Both of these pups are stressed, fearful and willing to defend themselves if pressed. Pup B is probably most prepared to bite at this moment.

Similar, and yet so different. Dog at right is telling you with his eyes exactly where he intends to bite.

Response to looming and staring.
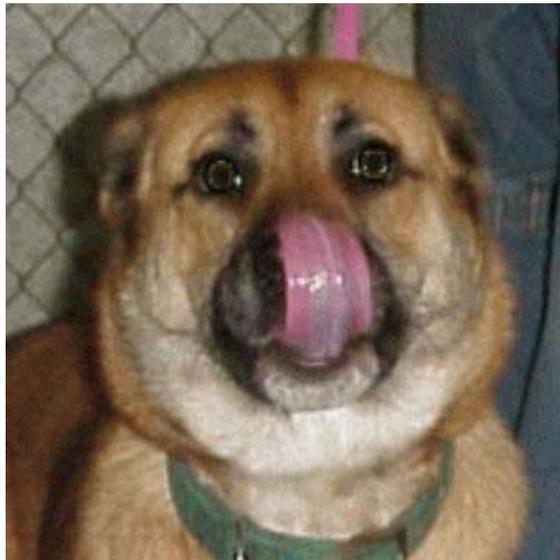
A. Direct eye contact -could growl if feels challenged. .B. Big calming signal - appeasing nose lick.

Relaxed, confident and well-socialized.

Lips, ears, facial muscles, eyes are relaxed, respiration normal.

**For more information on body language and calming signals,
Turrid Rugaas' Calming Signals booklet and video, available through Dogwise!**

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