

Management for Reactive Dogs



Safeguard your dog and others by immediately putting a management plan in place:

- Your first priority is to supervise, confine, leash and/or restrict your dog's activities in order to keep him SAFE. Not only are you responsible for your dog's behaviour, but *you need to protect your dog from his fear- and arousal-triggers.*
- Check with your veterinarian to rule out medical causes for your dog's behaviour.
- Neutering or spaying your dog *may reduce hormonally induced* inter-dog behaviours, although is unlikely to help in other cases.
- If you *must* take your dog out in public, depending on your dog's bite history or behaviour assessment, your instructor may suggest that you consider a cage-type muzzle as a temporary, additional precaution. Ask your instructor about selection, fitting and acclimation of the muzzle. *NOTE: The use of a muzzle does not mean that you can now put your dog into situations that you would not put him into if he was not wearing a muzzle!*
- Do not put yourself and your dog in situations where the dog practices acting out around other dogs or people. ***In order not to make your dog's condition worse, you must avoid all situations that triggered a reaction in the past, as well as all other situations that may possibly cause a reaction.***
- If your dog resource guards (toys, treats, locations, people), protect your dog from any and all situations that may trigger this behaviour and ask your instructor for directions on how to teach your dog that resource guarding is not necessary.
- Do not use any corrections or punishment. If your dog's actions are motivated by fear, corrections/punishment will only serve to make your dog even more fearful, and therefore more aggressive. If your dog's actions are motivated by over-arousal or frustration, punishment will fuel those emotions, too. Challenging an "aggressive" dog by harsh corrections may initially and temporarily suppress the behaviour but does not resolve the underlying issue. In fact, it will make it worse.
- Exercise your dog on your own property or select public areas where you are least likely to encounter triggers. Time of day, weather and location are the variables to look at. Plan walking places where there are escape routes - places where you can turn and walk away from an approaching dog or person.
- Do not go to dog parks, cafés or other unpredictable environments where you may meet other dogs or people that may trigger your dog's reactivity.
- If you see a dog or person approaching, remain calm, think pleasant thoughts, turn quickly and walk the other way while talking cheerfully to your dog. Throwing a handful of food at approaching off-leash dogs may interrupt their approach and facilitate your escape. ■

