

Predatory Behaviour



Predatory behaviour is typically unheralded and silent (unlike other types of play- or aggression-type chasing), as a predator does not wish to announce his presence and frighten the prey away.



Neither death nor ingestion, should death ensue, is a necessary consequence of the predatory behaviour, but serious injury may occur to the victim.

Victims may be certain species of animals, such as cats, birds, rabbits, squirrels, or even young children, or the behaviour may be triggered by individuals that exhibit sudden or uncoordinated movements, or high-pitched vocalizations. Infants, or the elderly, may be at risk. Other dogs, especially small dogs, may be targeted.

There is little evidence at this time that chasing passing vehicles is predatory behaviour, but it is not impossible. Most often, these cases turn out to be "fear aggression" and/or "territorial aggression", which is evident in that the dog does not react until the 'victim' has approached and reached a certain proximity.

It is not uncommon that dogs from herding breeds may be triggered by the motion of bicycles, cars, skateboards, joggers, etc. Rather than exhibiting the classic herding behaviour (silent, intermittent stalking behaviour) towards these triggers, these dogs typically exhibit obvious, continuous and sometimes vocal behaviours. This is unlike dogs that exhibit true predatory behaviour, who often freeze in the same situation.

Predatory behaviour is a hard-wired food-acquisition behaviour that your dog may engage in whether hungry or not. Remember, catching and consuming the prey is not necessary. The joy of the chase is a reward in itself.

Being "hard-wired", a "cure" is not expected. Safe management protocols must be put in place for the rest of the dog's life.

If there is any anxiety present in the dog, that must be treated, and this may include anti-anxiety medication. Mental and physical stimulation on a daily basis is critical. Impulse-control exercises will be very helpful, as will games that give the dog an outlet for his predatory behaviour under controlled circumstances.

If there is any indication whatsoever that the dog may engage in predatory behaviour towards children or infants, the dog should be rehomed to a child-free home and kept safely away from children for life.

