



Companion Animal Behavioural Services Creating Contentment From Knowledge And Kindness

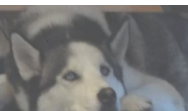
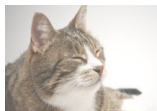
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COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOURS



Compulsive behaviours in dogs are similar to those in humans but, whereas humans often suffer intrusive thoughts, dogs, lacking language, feel compelled to repeat behaviours continuously. This is not only mentally distressing, it can result in physical harm, either directly as a result of the behaviour or indirectly as a consequence. It can also be very distressing to witness and difficult to interrupt.

Some breeds of dog may have a genetic predisposition to particular compulsive disorders or be prone to clinical conditions that result in a compulsive behaviour developing.



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Common Compulsive Behaviours

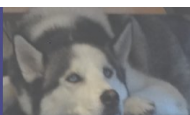
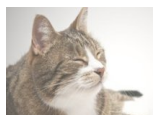
- Tail chasing
- Light chasing
- Flank or paw sucking
- Fly snapping
- Staring and freezing
- Licking or chewing
- Excessive drinking.

Causes of Compulsive Behaviours

Some compulsive disorders are known to have a genetic basis such as flank sucking in Doberman pinschers, spinning in bull terriers, tail chasing and fly snapping in border collies, fly chasing in miniature schnauzers and acral lick dermatitis in several medium-to-large breed dogs.

Various clinical reasons can promote compulsive disorders including pain and itchiness (pruritus) which may have several underlying causes. If not alleviated, normal behaviours to ease the discomfort may become stereotypies.

Dogs, especially those from working lines, may develop compulsive behaviours through frustration and boredom, chronic stress or repeated emotional conflict. It may also be more likely to occur in dogs that are kennelled for long periods, especially if the environment is stressful.



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Prevention and Relief

Preventing compulsive behaviours from developing requires being alert to the potential. It is normal play for puppies to chase their tail but, if the puppy then lacks enrichment and becomes bored and unstimulated, it can develop into something more serious.

Learning to recognise signs of pain and getting an early diagnosis from a vet can help prevent disorders such as acral lick dermatitis. Pain can even appear to be separation disorder as a dog may dig, chew or vocalise as a displacement activity.

Where compulsive disorders have already developed, behavioural modification and a change in environment or routine may be sufficient for mild cases but medication may be helpful in conjunction with behavioural modification may help with more severe cases.

Eliminating and alleviating a deeply ingrained compulsive behaviour is likely to take a lot of time, commitment and patience but in most cases, it is usually possible to see an improvement.

**Contact Companion Animal Behavioural Services at
info@dogsnet.org for more help**

