



Cornell University  
College of Veterinary Medicine



# DOG Watch

Expert information on medicine, behavior and health from a world leader in veterinary medicine

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## IN THE NEWS ...

### Initiative Focuses on Tick-borne Diseases

The prevalence of ticks and the diseases they cause has spread to the extent they're now found in all 50 states. To combat the threat to canine and human health, the AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF) has launched a fund-raising campaign to award research grants for new approaches to the problem. The kennel club will match all donations this year up to \$250,000.

When infected ticks bite a dog or human, they can transmit at least eight potentially serious illnesses, such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme disease. In addition to research, the CHF effort seeks better preventives, diagnostics and treatment.

More information, including an interactive map with the number of cases by state, is available at [www.akcchf.org/ticks](http://www.akcchf.org/ticks). The advice to owners: Check your dog for ticks daily if he's often outdoors. Pay close attention to the head, ears, shoulders and upper legs, and if you find a tick, immediately remove it with tweezers. ♦

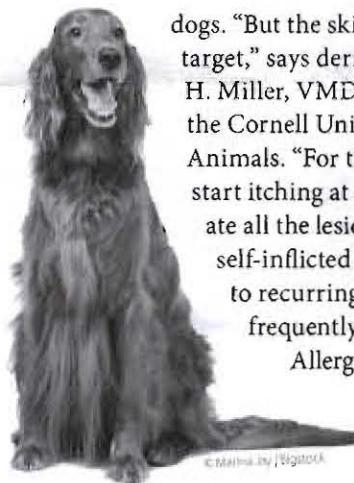
## Skin is the Target in Inhalant Allergies

*Sneezing and watery eyes can result, but sufferers will more often develop intense itching, sores and infections*

Your dog is scratching and biting himself, irritating his skin and licking away fur. He's itchy all over, particularly on his paws and face. You might suspect a flea infestation, but more likely allergies could be to blame.

Allergies to airborne substances, including pollens, molds and dust mites, rank second to flea allergies as the cause of an inflammation of the skin called canine atopic dermatitis (AD). What starts as a seasonal allergy can become year-round, affecting an estimated 10 to 30 percent of dogs.

**Initial Effects.** Atopy, like hay fever in humans, may cause sneezing, watery eyes and ear infections in



**It's in their genes:** Irish Setters are predisposed to atopic dermatitis.

dogs. "But the skin is always the main target," says dermatologist William H. Miller, VMD, Medical Director of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals. "For the most part, dogs start itching at normal skin and create all the lesions that are seen." The self-inflicted skin trauma can lead to recurring, raw, inflamed and frequently infected skin.

Allergies are caused by the body's immune system overreacting to triggering substances called allergens. Because the signs of atopy and food allergy are similar, "The only real way to

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## The Biggest Threat From Wildlife

*Their bite wounds can result in serious infection, crushed tissues, organ damage and the potential for deadly rabies*

While warm weather brings out some wildlife, most creatures that could injure your dog remain year-round threats. Bats can swoop indoors and coyotes in a search of a meal can jump fences.

Talk to your dog's veterinarian about the risks in your area. The list of other species that can harm your dog is extensive throughout the U.S., from venomous snakes, foxes, raccoons and skunks to Great Horned Owls.

The biggest danger results from being bitten. "Any bite wound needs to be seen immediately," says Gretchen L. Schoeffler, DVM, ACVECC, Section Chief of Critical

Care at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

**Unapparent Effects.** "Some animals can appear fine, but tissue can be crushed, and the body's immune cells can't get to the area where the bite occurred. Some bites are punctures. Some are a grab and pull. What you see at the surface of a bite wound is much like what you see of an iceberg above the surface. What lies below is much more impressive and worrisome."

First aid is not advised. "The only thing I would recommend is to apply pressure with a clean dry cloth if the wound is actively bleeding

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## SHORT TAKES

### Owners Humanize Pets and Spend to Prove It

Add up our expenses for pet healthcare, grooming, collars, leashes, toys, bedding, food and water bowls, and you'll understand why spending on dogs and cats in the U.S. reached a record high of \$60.28 billion last year — a 3.5 increase over 2014.

"The pet humanization trend is alive and well and continues to drive growth at the premium end of the market," says Bob Vetere, president and CEO of the American Pet Products Association, which issued the annual industry report. "As millennials prepare to take the reins from the baby boomer generation as the primary demographic of pet owners, they stand to further develop this trend."

Services such as boarding, training and pet sitting saw the biggest growth. They increased 11.8 percent to \$5.41 billion. Supplies and over-the-counter medication grew 3.9 percent to \$14.28 billion.

But pet food continues to be No. 1 in sales. Owners spent \$23.05 billion on food last year, a 3.5 percent increase, which the association attributes mainly to higher prices rather than a larger volume of sales. Veterinary care was second in spending at \$15 billion, up 2.5 percent.

For the second consecutive year, sales of animals declined, 1.4 percent to \$2.12 billion. Likely reasons for the trend, Vetere says, are a decline in pet types from breeders, a growing number of bans on pet sales and longer pet lifespans due to improved healthcare.

### The Risks of Human NSAIDs

A survey of 1,000 dog and cat owners in the U.K. found that one in 11, or 9 percent, admitted to giving human medication to their

pets an average of seven times in the past year. In some cases, the medicines were potentially toxic, says the pet insurer More Than>n, which uses the symbol for "greater than" in its name.

The owners' reasons for self-prescribing their dogs and cats include trying to avoid veterinary fees, believing the injury or illness didn't warrant professional treatment and wanting to provide quick pain relief after seeing their pet suffering. They dispensed medications for ailments ranging from paw injuries

to cuts and nettle stings. In addition, 5 percent say they gave protein shakes, bars and diet pills to increase their pets' stamina and get in shape.

However, owners' dispensing medications was the greatest concern, the insurer says: "Some mistakenly believed over-the-counter human medications were actually safe for pets to consume." Among the medications dispensed: antihistamines, acetaminophen,

antiseptic creams, ibuprofen and aspirin.

"Pet owners risk significant harm to their pet's well-being by giving them medicines designed for humans," says Andrew Moore, BVMS, MRCVS, pet claims veterinary consultant. "As vets, we may actually also use forms of human medication in the treatment of veterinary patients. However, dosing and delivery is everything, and only a veterinary professional can know the safe quantity of any medicine to administer to an animal."

Acetaminophen, which is found in Tylenol, and ibuprofen, found in Advil and other products, are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) that can cause severe poisoning in dogs and cats, according to the Pet Poison Helpline (855-764-7661). Both species can suffer red blood cell injury, stomach ulcers, kidney and liver failure, seizures, coma, even death. ♦



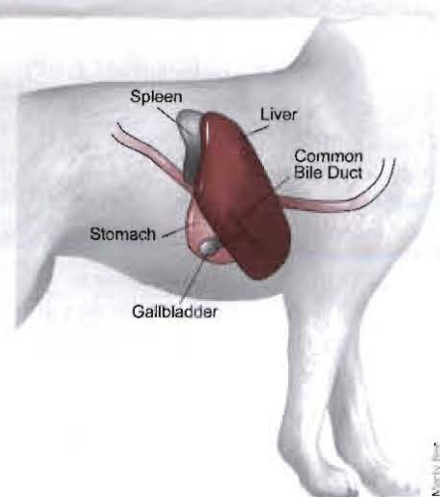
Services such as grooming, boarding and training had the biggest increase at more than 11 percent in a year.



# Gallstones May Show No Signs

*They're believed to be a rarity and have no ill effects unless a life-threatening blockage occurs*

Dogs don't develop gallstones the way we do. Ours are made from cholesterol. Theirs usually consist of calcium and a bile pigment called bilirubin. Just as in people, however, dogs can have gallstones without any symptoms or ill effects. Unless a dog has an X-ray or ultrasound for some reason, his owner might never know he had the disorder.



The gallbladder is located between the two liver lobes.

All the more important for owners to know that, although it would be a rarity, "If an obstruction occurs, it can be life threatening, requiring emergency surgery," says Meredith Miller, DVM, ACVIM, a lecturer in small animal internal medicine at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

**Tell-tale Signs.** Signs of an obstruction can include jaundice, with the eyes, skin and gums turning yellow. Dogs will often become quite sick — weak, refusing food and vomiting severely. An obstruction that ruptures the bile duct or gallbladder sending bile directly into the abdomen can be fatal, even with aggressive surgery.

"The true incidence of gallstones, called choleliths, isn't known because

they are often silent and don't cause any clinical signs," Dr. Miller says. "It seems more common in middle-aged to older pets and in small rather than large-breed dogs. The only breeds reported to be predisposed to gallstones are Miniature Schnauzers and Miniature Poodles but any dog breed is susceptible."

The gallbladder, a small organ located between the two liver lobes, stores bile from the liver and sends it through the bile duct into the small intestine. It aids with digestion, the absorption of fats and the elimination of waste products.

Gallstones are not usually present at birth. The conditions that can predispose a dog to developing gallstones include:

- ◆ A high bilirubin level from pre-existing liver or gallbladder disease. Bilirubin, a brownish yellow substance in bile, derives from red blood cells that the liver produces.
- ◆ An infection that allows the invasion of bacteria or inflammation of the bile ducts that can lead to failure of the bile to flow normally.
- ◆ Slow-moving bile, which can also be a risk factor associated with hypothyroidism, diabetes mellitus

## BILE'S CRITICAL FUNCTIONS

Bile has four purposes. It can:

1. Alkalize the contents of the small intestine to reduce stomach acid.
2. Help digest fats and oils.
3. Assist the rhythmic activity that moves food.
4. Eliminate waste products, including bilirubin and some drugs and medications.



The only breeds reported to be predisposed to gallstones are Miniature Schnauzers and Miniature Poodles, but any dog breed is susceptible.

and hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's disease).

- ◆ Increases in cholesterol and triglycerides, a type of fat in the blood. A high calcium or high-fat diet can hasten their development.

Many dogs have gallstones that don't cause problems, but they are often painful if they pass from the gallbladder through the bile duct into the intestine. Their size has been compared to small pebbles. The stones might cause signs of biliary colic — an ache caused by blocked flow of bile. Affected dogs will be intermittently mildly lethargic and suffer loss of appetite. They may vomit and have a fever or a painful abdomen for several days. They don't always show their pain in an obvious way, and vague signs of being occasionally "off" might be all that is noticeable, Dr. Miller says.

**The Best Test.** Dogs can have asymptomatic gallstones with no apparent signs on routine lab tests. When gallstones do make them obviously ill, indications will be apparent on blood tests, including increases in liver enzymes, bilirubin and cholesterol. These findings, however, are not specific for gallstones and can also be seen with other diseases such as gallbladder infection or

(continued on bottom of page 5)



## ALLERGIES... (continued from cover)

prove that an animal has AD is to make sure he doesn't have a food allergy, and that involves strict dietary manipulation," says Dr. Miller. "However, by carefully reviewing the patient's history and the patient himself, we typically know whether the dog has AD or a food allergy."

In addition to intense itching, the International Task Force for Canine AD reports that characteristic signs in dogs include skin eruptions, such as rashes and small papules (bumps). The body areas commonly affected are the paws, face, ear pinnae (the visible part), front of the neck, armpits, groin, abdomen, underside of the tail, inside of the thighs and the extremities.

"In dogs, AD is a contact dermatitis where the allergen binds to the skin and triggers the allergic reaction," Dr. Miller says, adding that owners should consult a veterinarian whenever skin conditions



An early case of atopic dermatitis on the left shows raw, inflamed skin while a severe case on the right shows more painful signs and extensive hair loss.

occur. "Atopic dermatitis is forever. Many dogs are easily managed with relatively safe medications. But some — the ones who visit a veterinary dermatologist — can continue to worsen each year and require a very intense management regimen."

Diagnosis can be challenging. A detailed medical history, physical exam and restricted diet can eliminate food, fleas

and disease as the reason for a dog's dermatitis. Identifying specific environmental allergens involves allergy testing, however, and "allergy testing isn't foolproof," Dr. Miller says. Allergy tests show that a dog has antibodies to specific substances, which means only that he has been exposed and reacted to ragweed or dust mites, for example.

## IS THE CULPRIT A PROTEIN RATHER THAN A HISTAMINE?

A veterinary pharmacologist at North Carolina State is testing a theory that a small protein released in response to inflammation may be the cause of itching in dogs rather than histamine. Studies have shown that the protein is released in response to atopic dermatitis in other animals, according to the Morris Animal Foundation, which is funding his study.

"Nearly nothing is known about the mechanisms of itch in the dog, making it difficult to develop new therapies," says researcher Wolfgang Baeumer, DrMedVet. He believes pollen, dust mites and similar allergens trigger the protein thymic stromal lymphopoietin (TSLP), which is produced by cells called keratinocytes in the skin's outermost layer.

"If you trigger keratinocytes with dust mite allergen, they start to secrete TSLP," Dr. Baeumer says. "TSLP directly affects the sensory neurons to induce itching in mice. If something could take TSLP away, it would take away the signal cascade and could reduce the itch."

His research has uncovered similar neural receptors in dogs, and, as part of his study, he has developed a laboratory model of canine keratinocyte and nerve cells. Only 10 to 15 percent of those nerve cells respond when stimulated by histamine, he says, suggesting that histamine is not the primary cause of dogs itching. He now plans to analyze the response of those canine cells to TSLP.

Eventually, Dr. Baeumer hopes to develop canine-specific antibodies to TSLP to treat atopy in dogs. "The upper layer of the skin, called the horny layer, is the body's protector," he says. "In atopic dogs, this skin barrier is interrupted by inflammation. Our hope is that if we dampen the inflammation by removing TSLP, we could enhance the body's natural repair."

**Pursuing Antibodies.** Antibodies are detected in several ways: by blood or serologic (serum) testing or by intradermal skin tests on the surface of mast cells, the white blood cells found in connective tissue. Many factors affect the accuracy of both allergy tests, so testing is recommended only if specific-allergen desensitization treatment is planned.

"We usually allergy test animals only for environmental allergies when avoidance and medical management don't

## THE VULNERABLE BREEDS

Some dogs are genetically predisposed to allergic atopic dermatitis, although no age or sex seems especially at risk. Most Terriers are vulnerable as well as:

- ◆ Bulldogs
- ◆ Dalmatians
- ◆ Lhasa Apsos
- ◆ Old English Sheepdogs
- ◆ Golden Retrievers
- ◆ Irish Setters



provide satisfactory results," says Dr. Miller. "There is no real benefit to testing unless you are going to use Allergen-Specific Immunotherapy (ASIT)."

The therapy, administered orally or by vaccine, uses individually-tailored allergen mixtures to desensitize the immune system not to overreact to those substances. Immunotherapy is successful in 50 to 75 percent of cases.

The first step in managing canine AD is to eliminate or reduce known allergens in the dog's environment. (See sidebar at the right.) Medical options include using fatty acid supplements, topical and oral steroids, antihistamines, allergen-specific immunotherapy and anti-microbial drugs to treat secondary skin infections. Two drugs are newly approved by the FDA for canine AD: the immunosuppressant drug cyclosporine A, and oclacitinib, which blocks a signaling pathway involved in inflammation.

Anti-inflammatories, including glucocorticoids such as prednisone, are most often prescribed for AD. However, dogs can develop adverse reactions to long-term steroid use, ranging from increased thirst and urination to a higher risk of infection and Cushing's disease.

"The drug selected depends on the animal's age and health issues, the length of his allergy season and owner expectations," Dr. Miller says. He uses ASIT frequently because Cornell primarily treats severe cases of year-round AD. Animals with milder or seasonal atopy may benefit from supplements with balanced omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids or antihistamines.

The complex mechanisms that cause AD in dogs are unclear. In humans,

itching is triggered by histamine, a chemical produced by mast cells as an immune response. Antihistamine effectiveness is considered unpredictable in dogs, however.

"The best treatment regime for a patient is one tailored to his specific needs," Dr. Miller concludes. "As the science of allergy in animals advances, new treatments for the atopic pet will become available." ♦

## FIVE SIMPLE PREVENTIVES

It's impossible to prevent environmental allergies from developing in any dog, but you can lessen his allergen load. "Exposure minimization, such as avoiding fields of goldenrod if the pet is allergic to it, can obviously help but is by no means enough," says dermatologist William H. Miller, VMD, at Cornell.

Other tactics that may help:

1. Close the windows in seasons when trees, grass and weeds pollinate.
2. Vacuum regularly using a HEPA filter to reduce dust.
3. Use dust-mite proof cases on your mattresses and pillows if your dog sleeps with you. Wash bed linens regularly with hot water.
4. Control the humidity in the home to prevent mold and mildew growth.
5. Select all topical treatments carefully, including shampoos and flea control measures. They could inflame the sensitive skin of an atopic dog.

## GALLSTONES... (continued from page 3)

mucocoele. (Please see below.) Ultrasound is the best test to diagnose gallstones

and determine if there is an obstruction that would require surgery.

## A CONDITION THAT CAN MIMIC OBSTRUCTION

When the gallbladder becomes distended by excessive mucus, the result is a mucocoele — an abnormally distended gallbladder that can cause signs that mimic infected or obstructed gallstones. The affected dog may be lethargic, vomit and have a low-grade fever and abdominal pain. He may also be jaundiced, with a yellow tinge to the mucous membranes and the whites of the eyes.

The condition is a surgical emergency because the bile forms a plug in the gallbladder, obstructing bile flow. Without surgery, the gallbladder will rupture and bile will leak into the abdomen. This is fatal without surgical intervention, and even after surgery potentially life-threatening complications can occur, says Meredith Miller, DVM, ACVIM, at Cornell. When a mucocoele is diagnosed before obstruction, the surgery is less risky. Mucocoeles seem to affect Cocker Spaniels and Shetland Sheepdogs disproportionately, but any dog can develop one.

"If there is an infection with gallstones, then we treat with broad-spectrum antibiotics and often with ursodiol, a drug that helps keep bile flowing normally. Unfortunately, most stones do not dissolve with treatment," Dr. Miller says. "If the dog has an obstruction or infection, surgical removal of the gallbladder is recommended because the stones tend to reform. Each time stones pass through the bile ducts, there's a risk of obstruction."

The encouraging news is that a dog can easily function without a gallbladder. Bile will pass through the common bile duct into the intestines instead of being stored in the gallbladder. While some dogs might require long-term medications and a low-fat, high-protein diet, they can generally live a happy, pain-free life. ♦



**BITES** ... (continued from cover)

and if this can be done safely, given the wound would be expected to be painful," Dr. Schoeffler says. "I also recommend not giving any over-the-counter or leftover medications but rather wait until the veterinarian has a chance to make an assessment and discuss treatment options."

Even wounds that appear to be relatively insignificant will benefit from veterinary attention. A bite wound will need to be cleaned and may be surgically explored, especially when the bite is over the neck, chest or abdomen. Underlying vital structures such as large blood vessels, nerves, the trachea, lungs and the abdominal organs are all vulnerable.

For example, "If a coyote grabs a dog around the abdomen, there is much more concern because the dog's liver, spleen or intestines can be damaged," Dr. Schoeffler says. "The sooner I can deal with it, the better the overall prognosis is for the dog."

Surgery may simply involve cleaning and closing the wound over a drain or be more extensive when multiple organs have been affected or significant



Dogs inside their fenced backyard can be vulnerable to wildlife that swoop and slither in.

blood loss has occurred. At the very least, your dog's hair will be clipped to allow for thorough examination, and the veterinarian will most likely prescribe antibiotics even if your dog seems fine.

"Bite wounds are much more likely to become infected," Dr. Schoeffler says. "In addition to a bite creating a wound that is by definition contaminated — think about the teeth with saliva compared to a wound created by relatively clean scissors during grooming — bites always come with crushing and tearing of the tissues. They may no longer have a good blood supply necessary for speeding healing. Its absence makes the injured tissue much more prone to infection."

If treatment is delayed and the wound becomes infected, the prognosis is uncertain. While infection can set in even with immediate treatment, the earlier antibiotics are started the better the outcome for the dog.

### IF A DOG IS BITTEN AND ISN'T CURRENT ON HIS RABIES VACCINE, HE MAY BE QUARANTINED

Rabies is the the biggest concern from a wild animal bite. The majority of rabies cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention occurs in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes.

If your dog is current on his rabies vaccine, the veterinarian will treat the wound and in most jurisdictions is required to give a booster, says Gretchen L. Schoeffler, DVM, ACVECC, Section Chief of Critical Care at Cornell. If there is human exposure, and the dog is not current on his rabies vaccine, he may be placed in quarantine either at home or a veterinary facility, possibly for six months at the owner's expense. "The reality is that rabies is almost uniformly fatal to any human or animal that contracts it."

If your dog isn't current on a rabies vaccine and is bitten by a wild animal and subsequently bites a person, the health department will be actively involved, says Dr. Schoeffler. It may require your dog be tested for rabies, which can be done only postmortem.

Most states require rabies vaccinations for domesticated animals, including dogs, cats and ferrets. Some states are beginning to provide exemptions for vaccination requirements if medically necessary as determined by a veterinarian, says the American Veterinary Medical Association.

### Coyotes at Dawn and Dusk

Today coyotes can be found in every state except Hawaii. They're omnivores, scavenging for livestock, rabbits, rodents, birds, carrion and — as suburbia edges into their territory — pet cats and dogs, according to the USDA's Animal and Plant Inspection Service. "Coyotes have learned that small dogs and cats are easy prey."





**Coyotes** are found in every mainland state.

Coyotes are most often seen at sunrise and sunset and have no fear of approaching a house for food. The USDA's advice: Feed pets inside and eliminate sources of water.

### Toads in the West and South

Toad toxicity is rare but can happen when a dog pounces and takes a bite of one. Most toads taste bitter, and even dogs who mouth non-toxic toads will have excessive drooling, possible pawing at the face and an episode or two of vomiting, Dr. Schoeffler says.

At least two toads are toxic, and if ingested and not immediately treated, can be fatal. The Colorado River (Sonoran) toad is found near the river and its large streams from Arizona to Southern California. The Giant Marine Toad is endemic to South Texas and Florida. Signs of ingestion of either toad include crying, pawing at the mouth or eyes, drooling, respiratory distress, unsteady movements, sei-

zures, fever and collapse. Wash the poison from the mouth with water and get veterinary care. It takes only half an hour for toxins to get into the system.

The poisons can cause irregular heartbeats, and monitoring and medications may be needed. The prognosis is poor but some dogs survive.

### Seasonal Snakebites

Pit vipers inflict the most venomous snakebites in North America. In the

Southeast, they include rattlesnakes, water moccasins and copperheads. Coral snakes are in the cobra family.

Snakebites tend to be seasonal and regional, usually occurring in warm weather from spring through autumn. The incidence is *highest* in the Southeast and West. Effects of a coral snakebite might not be seen for hours, but most victims of pit vipers



**The poisonous Colorado River Toad.**

show signs within half an hour. Signs of poisoning are shock, listlessness, muscle tremors, nausea, vomiting and difficulty breathing.

"Try to identify the snake because a lot of snakes that look like venomous ones are beneficial snakes," Dr. Schoeffler says. "Get a photo on your cell phone if you can. If you kill the snake, take a picture or bring it in, but only if you can do so safely."

Antivenin is expensive and its availability limited because the venom must be milked from live snakes. Treatment may involve blood transfusions and supportive care with intravenous fluids. The prognosis depends on the species, the amount of venom injected, the dog's overall health and the bite's location.

Dr. Schoeffler's parting advice: "Know your environment. If you've relocated, discuss potential local dangers with your dog's new veterinarian. Immediate care is crucial in optimizing outcome." ♦

## 'TIGERS OF THE NIGHT'

Reports of attacks on dogs by the Great Horned Owl are dramatic but rare. The owl is a formidable predator, stalking from high above or walking nimbly around backyard bushes. It can take down birds and mammals larger than itself — males average about three pounds — and it can ingest what the Cornell Lab of Ornithology describes as "an exceptionally wide variety of prey."

The remarkable list includes raccoons, rabbits, squirrels, falcons, other owls and skunks. The National Geographic adds that the owl has "even been known to prey upon unlucky cats and dogs."

Great Horned Owls are mostly nocturnal, earning the nickname "Tigers of the Night," though some do hunt in daylight. Their young begin hunting in spring and summer. The best advice for owners: Don't let your dog out in his fenced yard at sunset and sunrise.



**The Great Horned Owls' yellow eyes** are amplified by an orange facial disk outlined in black. Their wingspan can reach five feet.





Michael P. Connolly, Cornell

**Pamela Perry, DVM, Ph.D.,** provided the answer on this page. She is a resident in animal behavior at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine and an instructor for the small animal behavior course.

**Please Share Your Questions**  
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## COMING UP ...

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## Is His Aggression Toward Other Dogs Stalking or Demanding Play?

**Q** We are the proud parents of a wonderful 4½-year-old Lab-Pointer mix. Harrison is a smart, active guy. He is our constant companion who runs, hikes and snowshoes the trails leashless with me near our home daily.

He is very friendly with people, never met anyone he didn't love, but he can sometimes be aggressive with other dogs. When he meets another dog, he will get down on the ground, front paws to the front and belly on the ground, then run at the approaching dog and throw his front leg over the shoulder of the other dog.

It can happen to smaller dogs, and he has even attempted to do it to Great Danes. He will give a growl but never bites. If the dog responds similarly, then no problem. He seems to calm right down and get on with dog stuff, sniffing and posturing.

This is OK for dogs who give as good as they get, but if they are submissive, he continues to dominate. We run on the weekend with a sweet male 11-year-old Lab who has arthritis. Harrison will bring him down to the ground, which is heartbreaking. How can I stop this unwanted behavior? Thanks for any advice you can give.

**A** Harrison sounds like a great companion who keeps you both in shape, hiking and snowshoeing. I am not exactly sure what he is doing when he sees another dog. If his front paws are forward and his belly is to the ground, he may be stalking or demanding play.

You can use the position of his hindquarters to determine whether he is giving a play bow. A play signal is chest to the ground but rump up. Stalking would be both chest and rump down — displaying a low profile so he can sneak up on his "prey."

Judging from his reaction to people and to dogs who "give as good as they get," I think he is trying to play but the growl does not fit. The paw on the shoulder is a classical dominant posture but can

occur as a part of play. Play has aspects of aggressive and sexual behavior, which is probably why dogs have a signal — the play bow that we believe means, "What ever happens next, do not take seriously."

In any case, I regret to tell you that Harrison is socially inept. He does not wait to see if the other dog wants to play but barrels right in and invades the other dog's personal space. Sometimes it works in that the other dog will greet him, but others are intimidated or in so much pain that they do not rebuff his advances.

The solution is easy. Do not let him run free — leashless — especially when you know he is going to torture his senior Lab friend. The alternative to a leash is excellent off-leash recall. To start the process, call him in the house and give him a tidbit for coming. Do this 10 times a day. When he is perfect at coming in the house, you can move outside, but he should be on a leash so he cannot make a mistake.

Call him and reward him for coming. Never ever punish him for not coming. If he does not come, you can (gently) pull him to you, but he will probably come just fine now that he knows that if he approaches you closely, good things appear in his mouth. When he is perfect at coming in the yard on a leash, you can substitute a fish line for the leash, so he does not know that he is tethered. Repeat the process until he is perfect.

Finally, take him to an enclosed area like a tennis court and practice calling him. The true test will be when he sees another dog. Will he come to you or rush to poke at the other dog? Good luck and continue to enjoy your companion. ❖



**Harrison, a Lab-Pointer mix,** is good with people but goes after submissive dogs.

### CORRESPONDENCE

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