



## TRIGGER STACKING

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

IN THE EVENT THAT A DOG SHOWS CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR - REGARDLESS OF WHY, OR WHAT THAT BEHAVIOUR IS, YOU MUST INFORM YOUR ADMIN OR A MEMBER OF PPTF IMMEDIATELY.

EARLY INTERVENTION IS PARAMOUNT IN HELPING THESE DOGS AND RECTIFYING THE BEHAVIOUR! AS WELL AS, IN SOME EXTREME CASES, ENSURING THE WELFARE OF PEOPLE AND THE DOG.

- Adopting a rescue dog is an absolutely amazing and satisfying experience but it is extremely important you understand that these dogs have been through very challenging situations and have literally been fighting for their lives.
- Some dogs have had kinder experiences than others, but nevertheless, each dog requires understanding and patience.
- It is our obligation to inform you that challenges and issues with behaviour may very well present themselves.
- You may find your dog settles very easily, like they've always been there.

- You may have a dog who is absolutely petrified at first and needs time to gain your trust. Whatever the situation may be, it is our promise to you to support you and the dog in every event to give you the best experience with your adoption.
- Below is a list of behaviours you may notice with your new pet. Try not be alarmed by any displays of these behaviours and remain calm in any situation.
- Your reaction can affect your dog as they will pick up on these feelings.
- By following our advice with introductions (see the useful information pages) and helping your dogs to settle, a lot of these behaviours can be avoided or more easily managed.

**If any of the following should occur please message your admin for advice on training techniques and behavioural management:**

- ⇒ Dominance towards other pets or people.
- ⇒ Growling, snarling, snapping, or biting.
- ⇒ Destructiveness of furniture, walls, bedding etc.
- ⇒ Food and resource guarding.
- ⇒ Pulling, reactivity on leads, toilet training.
- ⇒ Anxiety including separation anxiety.
- ⇒ Fear or reactivity to men or children.
- ⇒ Fear or reactivity to other dogs or animals on or off lead.
- ⇒ Fear or reactivity in general (this includes the dog being too petrified to be touched, or allow you to put on a harness etc.).
- ⇒ Barking, accidents in the home, issues with training.

Please be aware that these issues do not apply to every dog. Some dogs can settle more easily than other dogs but you **MUST** be aware that these issues can happen!

It is our obligation as a rescue to fully inform you as an adopter/foster about any dog you wish to adopt/foster and offer you support if these issues occur.

- Kennel behaviour does not reflect home behaviour and some behaviours may not be evident in a kennel but may occur within the home.
- These issues can and are able to be worked with given time, patience and support.
- If you would like to be referred to one of our behaviourists, please contact your admin who will send you a behavioural assessment form and instructions on who to send the form to.

### **TRIGGER STACKING**

**Why does my dog react to some people and not to others, when there is no difference between them?**

**The answer is TRIGGER STACKING.**

- When a dog reacts - be that a bark, chasing someone away, or even a bite, it is because his brain can take no more triggers.
- A trigger is anything that starts the stress reaction in a dog's body and mind.
- A stress reaction is physical. It is not something a dog can control, even if they wanted to, it's an innate survival response to a threat.
- Once long ago for both of our species, it was beneficial to us. As we have become physically safer the stress reaction has remained.
- The Trigger stacker is essential when a dog is becoming stressed by triggers acting simultaneously or one after the other, essentially stacking on top of each other and created a bigger reaction from the dog.

- The physical stress reaction causes an ancient fight or flight response and the brain goes into fast forward reactive mode.
- If the trigger is removed, the brain goes into reverse and the dog starts to calm down.

#### HOWEVER

- If the trigger gets closer (or more threatening in the dog's mind) the brain will fast forward at an alarming rate, until the dog reacts.
- It is vital to remember that a dog's stress reaction is based on their own learning experiences, fears, personality and ability to cope. It is NOT based on things that we may consider worrying to them!

**Recognising the signs of stress can help you establish what your dog's triggers are and essential in allowing you to avoid these situations and help your dog overcome this.**

#### **SIGNS OF STRESS**

- ⇒ Cowering/Moving/Backing Away/ Hiding.
- ⇒ Lunging/Barking/Growling.
- ⇒ Trembling.
- ⇒ Panting.
- ⇒ Leaving sweaty paw prints.
- ⇒ Dilated pupils.
- ⇒ Submissive urination.
- ⇒ Refusal to take treats.
- ⇒ Walking in a zig-zag motion

#### **POTENTIAL TRIGGERS**

- ⇒ Strangers in the home.
- ⇒ Cars - either cars approaching or entering a car.
- ⇒ New animals.
- ⇒ Food.

- ⇒ Children.
- ⇒ Men.
- ⇒ Loud noises (fireworks, loud voices etc.).
- ⇒ Fast/sudden movements.
- ⇒ New environments.
- ⇒ Leads, collars and harnesses.
- ⇒ Being approached and stroked.
- ⇒ Seeing people when on walks.
- ⇒ Seeing other dogs/animals when on walks.
- ⇒ In a room with doors closed.
- ⇒ Being alone/being alone for too long.
- ⇒ Toys, bedding or approaching an area they feel safe.

To work out a trigger you can do your own assessment. This can help you identify the reason behind behaviours being displayed and help you work with the dog to overcome the trigger and avoid situations where they feel stressed.

Ask questions such as does your dog show signs of stress when children approach them too quickly? If so, what signs do they display and how quickly does these signs appear?

As always, please contact your admin or anyone at PPTF if you need any help or assistance.

