

BACK →

Resource Guarding Behavior – Aggression Levels

Healthy

Level 1

When you approach the dog at his food bowl he stops eating, wags his tail, and comes over to greet you. Happy to share toys, food, etc.

Level 2

Dog looks at you, wags his tail, and continues eating, but is still relaxed about your presence in the food zone.

Treatable Rehabilitatable

Level 3

Dog's body may tense as you approach, and he may also wag his tail, however the speed of the wag will increase as you get closer to him.

Level 4

You may see a glare in his eye when he looks at you, perhaps lifting the lip in a snarl, maybe a low growl, and obvious increase in eating speed.

Treatable Manageable

Level 5

If food or item is portable the dog may carry the item under a chair, bed or into his crate. He may growl when you come closer. If he cannot pick item up, he may move the item farther away from you.

Level 6

A snap, no contact with your flesh, but a no uncertain-terms statement that the dog is not prepared to share his food with you.

Unhealthy/Untreatable

Level 7

Bite. Rarely does a food guarding bite not break skin – the contact is usually very quick and hard, and may consist of several puncturing bites that move up the transgressor's arms or face.

Level 8

Severe food guarding can be triggered even at a distance. At the strongest level, even a person on the far side of the room can be perceived as a threat to the highly valued food or item and the dog's behavior can escalate very quickly and alarmingly with a seemingly innocuous movement, even from far away.

BACK →

Aggressive and Anxiety Related Behavioral Conditions: Condensed version

For an animal with an anxiety or aggression behavioral concern, two things should be identified:

1. What starts (triggers/initiates/prompts) the aggressive or anxious behavior
 - a. Examples include:
 - i. A child nearby (could be fear aggression/fear)
 - ii. A squirrel (predatory aggression)
 - iii. A loud noise (noise phobia)
 - iv. Being left alone (separation anxiety)
 - v. An unfamiliar person walking onto the dog's territory (territorial aggression)
2. A description of what the animal does when aggressive/anxious
 - a. This may include a description of past injuries that the dog has inflicted, past damage on inanimate objects that the dog or cat has caused, behavior that has been witnessed by the staff (e.g. when you walked in the room the dog growled at you).
 - b. The description of the behavior will be classified into mild, moderate and severe levels of aggressive or anxious behavior.

Aggressive Behavior

Behavioral Triggers:

Level 1: well defined (discrete) triggers and avoidable triggers – examples: dog or cat is only aggressive when you trim its nails – it is a clear trigger and it can be avoided (take dog/cat to groomer/veterinarian for nail trim).

Level 2: well defined (discrete) triggers but unavoidable in some households; dog/cat is only aggressive to toddlers; in households without children, close contact with toddlers is avoidable; in households with young children, it is difficult to avoid contact with the toddlers.

Level 3: poorly defined/unidentifiable triggers and/or unavoidable triggers; dog/cat is aggressive to all men (impossible to avoid all men); dog/cat will growl when you walk by it.

Intensity of Aggression (Historical or Witnessed):

Level 1: Warnings such as stare/tension/growl/hiss/snarl/head threat (turning head quickly around in direction of intended target)/snap at air but you suspect or have knowledge that the dog/cat is unlikely to actually bite.

Level 2: Bite with contact but it does not cause a skin abrasion or any blood or it causes just a superficial skin abrasion (scratch) with minimal bleeding; also includes animals with barriers in place to prevent contact (behind fencing/wearing a muzzle) that exhibit level one warnings with such intensity that you anticipate that if a barrier was not present, the animal would be likely to inflict injury.

Level 3: Bite with significant wound/blood drawn; single or multiple bites; also includes animals with barriers in place to prevent contact (behind fencing/wearing a muzzle) that exhibit level one warnings and then actively attack (bite/swat) the barrier.

Anxiety Related Conditions

Triggers

Level 1: well defined triggers and avoidable triggers; dog is scared of flags waving in the wind.

Level 2: well defined triggers but unavoidable in some households; dog/cat is scared of loud noises / toddlers etc.

Level 3: poorly defined/unidentifiable triggers and/or unavoidable triggers; dog/cat is nervous all the time; cat hides all the time under the bed; dog always upset when left alone and has to be left alone.

Intensity of Anxiety:

Level 1: mild anxiety with mild destruction/mild vocalization.

Level 2: moderate anxiety with moderate destruction/moderate vocalization.

Level 3: animal is sustaining self-injury, its welfare is compromised or inflicting serious damage/putting others at risk.

Categorization Based upon Level of Trigger and Intensity for Anxiety Related and Aggressive Behaviors:

	Trigger Level 1	Trigger Level 2	Trigger Level 3
Intensity Level 1	TM / TR	TM / TR	TM
Intensity Level 2	TM / TR	TM / TR	UU
Intensity Level 3	UU	UU	UU