

An excerpt from

## ***Stress in Dogs***

by Martina Scholz & Clarissa von Reinhardt,  
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### **Stress Symptoms**

There are quite a few symptoms that indicate a dog might be stressed, and usually more than one of them occurs at the same time. Observe your dog, try to find out whether you can recognize one or more of such symptoms and what might be causing them.

Important: Of course, some of these types of behavior also appear when the dog is not stressed, such as panting. He may only be panting because it is a really hot day, or because he has just played extensively. You must always consider the context for such behavior.

Another criterion is the question of how often the behavior occurs. If, after taking the whole picture into consideration, you get the impression that the behavior is actually stress-induced, you should think about changes. You will find ideas and inspiration for doing so in the chapter on the Anti-Stress Program.

#### **Nervousness**

The dog is very easily startled, seems generally jumpy and nervous.

#### **Restlessness**

This may appear as constant fidgeting. The dog can only relax with difficulty or not at all, is unable to calm down even in the places where he usually lies down and pays a lot of attention to any noise. Often such dogs also pull hard on the leash because they lunge forward as if they were being hunted.

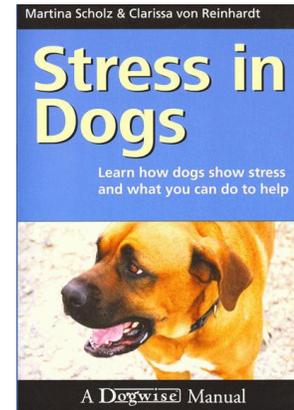
#### **Overreaction**

The dog suddenly reacts in a restless, timid or aggressive manner to events or situations in which he would normally stay calm and relaxed.

#### **Calming Signals**

They are often shown by a dog if he feels insecure, stressed or overburdened.

If even the trained eye cannot notice any signals anymore, the dog might be so stressed that he has stopped this form of communication, perhaps even



“freezes” (which means that he does nothing anymore).this form of communication, perhaps even “freezes” (which means that he does nothing anymore).

A worsening of the situation is called “mental submergence”. In her book *On Talking Terms With Dogs: Calming Signals* (Dogwise Publishing, 2006), Turid Rugaas illustrated the case of a Do Khyi which was so overburdened that he “became literally psychotic, withdrew from reality into an inner world where no bad things could reach him”.

#### **Defecation and urination**

Both can be examples of stress symptoms. In the event of great fear or a sudden fright, the release of adrenaline and the activation of the sympathetic nervous system signal the rectum to defecate. Additionally, shifts in the water balance occur, resulting in a more frequent need to urinate.

#### **Mounting**

Mounting is not always sexually motivated but can also be stress-induced. It often occurs in mixed dog groups and is a commonly mistaken gesture of dominance. However, leading cynologist agreed that mounting with its typical push movements of the pelvis is not necessarily dominant behavior, unlike the T-position, biting the nose area and putting the head onto another dog’s neck or back area.

Author info **Martina Scholz** is a pharmacist who has trained dogs for many years. She lives in a small village north of Berlin where she runs her own dog training school and lives with five dogs, four horses and two cats. **Clarissa von Reinhardt** has operated her own dog training school, **animal learn**, for nearly fifteen years and lectures on training dogs with behavioral disorders. She lives in a small village in Bavaria with her husband, five dogs, four cats, and six horses.