

Info shared by Pitbull SA.

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Common compulsive behaviors.

Spinning.

Some dog spin in place and aren't easily distracted when doing so.

Pacing.

Some dogs walk or trot along a specific path in a fixed pattern like a tiger in a cage. Pacing can be in a circle or in a straight line.

Tail chasing.

A dog runs in a tight circle, as if chasing his tail. Tail chasing may include physical damage to the tail or just the motion of chasing it.

Fly snapping.

Some dogs chomp at the air, as if they're trying to catch imaginary flies.

Barking.

Some dogs barks almost nonstop when there is no apparent trigger or separation barking and howling.

Toy fixation.

Some dogs repeatedly pounce on, push, chew or toss a certain toy or toys in the air. Often the pattern of play is repetitive. This kind of compulsive behavior frequently occurs in a specific room, but a dog might engage in compulsive behavior with specific toys in any room or in the yard.

Shadow or light chasing.

A dog chases shadows or light.

Thunder or lightning chasing and barking.

Some dogs chase thunder and lightning nonstop till the storm passes.

Self-injurious chewing, licking or scratching.

Some dogs inflict injury to themselves through frequently chewing, licking or scratching some part of his body over and over.

Note! - Dogs who excessively or compulsively lick or chew themselves must be taken to a veterinarian to rule out physical causes, such as pain and itching.

Flank sucking.

Some dogs suck on the fur or skin on their flanks (the area above the thigh).

Licking surfaces or objects.

Some dogs frequently lick a surface or an object (for example, a spot on the floor, couch or a wall) over and over again.

Excessive water drinking.

Some dogs repetitively drink water, even when they're not thirsty.

Rule out medical problems first.

Underlying medical problems or other physical situations often create conditions that irritate dogs and can cause them to react with behavior that looks compulsive to pet parents.

A dog with allergies parasites, a skin condition or pain will lick or bite the affected area constantly.

In addition to specific irritations, medical conditions that can affect your dog's behavior include epilepsy, head injuries, bacterial or viral infections, and poor vision.

In all of these situations, the underlying medical problem must be treated by a veterinarian before behavioral treatment will help.

Train your dog.

If you use methods based on positive reinforcement (rewarding your dog for behaviors you like so that they happen more often), teaching your dog some useful obedience skills will strengthen the relationship between the two of you. It will also provide an opportunity for you to interact with your dog in a positive way. *{See article about obedience training on this website}.*

After you've taught your dog a few useful skills, you can use them in your treatment plan.

Medications may help.

Always consult with your veterinarian or a board-certified veterinary behaviorist before giving your dog any type of medication for a behavior problem.

In some cases, it can be helpful to use medication in addition to training and enrichment. If your dog is so anxious or stressed by whatever upsets him that his compulsive behavior cannot be stopped or redirected, or if he shows improvement for a time but then seems to stop improving, medication might be needed to make your treatment plan effective. Medications may also be necessary for dogs who have been engaging in compulsive behavior for a long time.

If your veterinarian prescribes a medication for your dog's compulsive behavior, be prepared to give it to your dog every day.

Keep in mind that it may take a few weeks before you see changes.

For more fun, effective ways to spice up your dog's life with physical and mental exercise, exercising with your dog and enriching your dog's life *{see articles under exercise and conditioning on this website}.*