

## Deaf Dog Awareness Week Aims to Educate

**Deafness in dogs can be attributed to genetics, illness and aging.**

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It's Deaf Dog Awareness Week, and some of the same things that cause humans to lose their hearing are the same things that cause dogs to lose theirs, according to the Deaf Dog Education Action Fund (DDEAF). Dogs can be born deaf due to a genetic defect, they can lose their hearing due to an ear infection, or gradually go deaf as they grow older.

Deaf Dog Awareness Week aims to educate on how to identify a deaf dog and dispel common myths about deaf dogs. Specialized tests can determine if dogs have lost some or all of their hearing, but simple ways to test at home include rattling keys or ringing a bell to see if the dog responds. Partially deaf dogs may be able to detect the sound, but may be unsure where it originated. Owners should be aware that if sounds are too loud, deaf dogs may be able to detect vibrations and in turn, give a response that the owner may confuse with the dog having "heard" the sound.

Some breeds are more prone to genetic deafness, such as Dalmatians. The Dalmatian Club of America reported that 4 to 8 percent of Dalmatians are deaf in both ears, and up to 22 percent are deaf in one ear. The most common cause of genetic deafness is having unpigmented skin in the inner ear; this causes nerve endings to die off in the first few weeks of life resulting in deafness, according to DDEAF.

Early signs indicating deafness may include a puppy that bites its littermates too hard or plays too aggressively because the deaf puppy can't hear the other dogs' yelps of pain. Deaf dogs can be trained to soften their bites, and it's a myth that deaf dogs are more aggressive, according to DDEAF.

Ways to train deaf dogs include vibrating collars and sign language, however a veterinarian can determine the best course of action based on the individual dog.

For more information about the Deaf Dog Education Action Fund, visit [www.deafdogs.org](http://www.deafdogs.org).