

## Why Dogs Do What They Do

**Get to know your dog better by understanding his natural behavior traits.**

*Gary Wilkes*

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Dogs bite, which may have been the most important reason humans had for keeping dogs. Hunting large animals was dangerous in the Stone Age. If a dog attacked wildebeests in exchange for the promise of scraps, the humans were satisfied. Dogs that failed to attack were not kept as breeding stock, so it shouldn't be surprising that dogs bite. Today's dogs bite intruders, fast-moving objects (especially screaming children), people who want to take their possessions and veterinarians who want to poke and prod them which is like the Stone Age, minus veterinarians.

Along with the chasing/biting behavior of early hunting dogs, scent detection was also important. A dog could detect prey far better than a human by using its highly sensitive nose. Today they use this trait to find delectable garbage, goose humans and locate decayed animals. If your dog drags some roadkill through the doggie door or tries to get too friendly with Aunt Polly, don't be surprised.

Much is made of the fact that wolves live in relative harmony because of pack dominance. This implies they have a hierarchy and a number of behaviors to reduce violence between pack members. As long as you say wolves, you are mostly correct. But this isn't the case with dogs, which are significantly different from their ancestors. The study that counted how often Cocker Spaniels bark also looked at how dogs live when not exposed to humans. The scientists isolated family groups of five breeds in their own small fenced areas. The dogs were observed but had no contact with humans other than for food and water. Beagles were even more passive than wolves while Fox Terriers had regular, bloody fights.

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