

Shadow-Dancing Dog

Is your dog chasing its shadow?

Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I have an adorable 2-year-old English Bulldog named Bianca. I adore her, but she has an interesting problem of chasing shadows. At first, I thought she might have a serious mental problem, but now I think it's a game for her. She acts normal most of the time but for the other 12 hours of the day she is disengaged with humans or dogs and chases shadows. Even if we take her to the dog park, she follows humans around to jump on their moving shadows. People think it's amusing, but I think it isn't healthy for her or us! I'm wondering if she has obsessive-compulsive disorder or if this is just a bad habit. Do you have any suggestions for helping us put an end to this?

A. How unique, a shadow-chasing Bulldog! I picture her as a four-legged Peter Pan whose face has been dramatically shortened, and is in need of some cosmetic dentistry.

As long as she acts normally for most of the time, I would say no worries. If you really want her to stop chasing shadows, you could do the following:

1. Only take her out at high noon or on moonless nights, when there are no shadows.
2. Only take her on walks in cemeteries, where many of the inhabitants cast no shadows.

In the meantime, enjoy Bianca's clownish behavior, and allow her to entertain and amuse all of the shadow-casting humans she encounters.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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