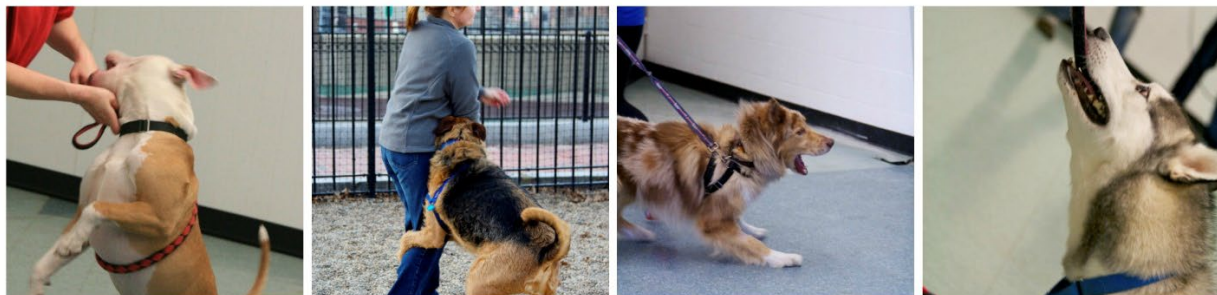


# Arousal Communication<sup>i</sup>

Often in shelters we observe dogs that demonstrate high arousal or excitement behaviors. The arousal or excitement can be due to many factors including age (adolescent dogs), confinement, lack of physical and mental outlets, and personality. Arousal/excitement is often a response to a stimulus the dog likes: such as a person, dog, or toy. For example, a dog with soft, relaxed body, eyes, mouth and a wagging tail that jumps up for your attention is a dog that is seeing a *favorable* stimulus (person). He may also play-bow: rear end in the air, front end lower if he is excited about a favorable stimulus (person or toy). However, arousal behaviors can also be due to *unfavorable* stimulus: such as an unwanted person, dog, or situation. Arousal signals in response to an unfavorable stimulus may be coupled with *fear signals*, such as trembling or a low/tucked tail. Arousal signals may also be paired with *aggressive signals* such as barking or lunging, or with *anxious signals* such as pacing or spinning.

Some common behaviors observed in aroused/excited dogs are jumping, mounting, and mouthing. Mouthing can be soft (teeth contact but no pressure or pain) or hard (teeth contact causing pain and discomfort) or biting of leash or clothing. When a dog is aroused or excited, its fur can be pilo-erect (standing up), its ears are generally forward or at attention, and its body stance is upward and erect. The tail is often up and wagging stiffly, and the eyes are open wide and very focused. The dog may also be barking and/or lunging.



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<sup>i</sup> Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine