



ANIMAL ANTICS

Have you ever asked yourself “Why Does My Dog”? Over the coming months we shall look at Scent, Sight & Sound to give you a clearer insight into ‘your dog’s world’, thus allowing greater communication between you.

“IN YOUR DOG’S WORLD” PART 2 ... SIGHT

From behind his eyes, your dog is looking out at a world you would hardly recognise. All dogs integrate what they see of their surroundings with a detailed scent map of which we are largely unaware. They are also sensitive to sounds that we cannot detect.

In most breeds, the eyes are set to the side of the head, so their binocular vision is over a narrower field than ours (about 20° less). The degree of binocular vision varies between breeds because of variations in the positions of the eyes. Although dogs’ binocular vision is not as good as ours, they have much wider peripheral vision (about 70° more), which gives them a greater awareness of movement. They can detect movements so subtle that they would have to be magnified 10 times before a human could see them. Visual signs are important in canine communication (posture, ear position, tail position, and movement and hair pattern communicate mood and intention).



Binocular vision occurs where the field of view of each eye overlaps, as ours do, and is necessary for accurate depth perception. The view from the wider-set eyes of dogs has less overlap and less binocular vision and thus poor depth perception. This means that although dogs can see movement well and can see an object approaching them, it is difficult for them to gauge how far away it is or how rapidly it is moving towards them.

TRIVIA: Humans with perfect eyesight are said to have 20/20 vision - we can distinguish letters or objects at a distance of 20 feet. Dogs typically have 20/75 vision - they must be 20 feet from an object to see it as well as a human standing 75 feet away. Certain breeds have better visual acuity. Labradors and German Shepherds are bred for better eyesight and have sight that is closer to 20/20 than most other breeds.

TRIVIA: A dog will react to subtle changes in body language that you don’t even notice. This may explain why your dog growls at an approaching stranger. Their body language may appear normal to you, but threatening to the dog.

TRIVIA: Dogs have rudimentary colour vision that allows them to pick out objects based on colour. Shades of colour, however, are not well discriminated. Therefore, there’s no need to pick a particularly bright Frisbee for your dog as, generally, it will be the movement that they follow.

Lastly, don't expect your dog to recognise you across the field by sight. Because of the number of rods in the retina, dogs see moving objects much better than they do stationary objects. If you are standing still and silent it will confuse him. He will realise who you are when you move in a way that is peculiar to yourself. If you speak, he will recognise your voice easily at that distance and, if the wind is blowing the right way, he will smell you! So, modify your training based on this fact ... use a wide sweeping motion with your arms, call him and/or use of whistle to cue your dog at a distance.

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