

## **Nervousness**

Dogs that lead sheltered lives when young and that are not exposed to the many strange, sights, sounds and smells of the world develop a strong instinct of self preservation, act fearful and can appear nervous.

The crucial period in a dogs life is when they are a puppy and experiencing as many situations circumstances and environments as possible creates an adaptable and confident dog. Should they be confined to just one environment and have only minimum experience then any changes in later life become a little harder to deal with. Mentally sensitive dogs such as Collie types are acutely aware of their environment, this coupled with a sheltered existence means that familiarising the dog to new environments when older will require a progressive, positive, training period.

With objects you know the dog is unsure of and that are accessible such as brushes and the Hoover should be placed in the home so the dog can investigate them in his own time. Think of anything within the home likely to startle the dog and gradually begin a process of familiarization. Make sure these items are secure and not likely to fall. Another strategy is to play games whilst these items are out in the same room, to build a positive association. You could also try feeding the dog progressively closer to these items.

Nervous responses to other dogs is likely to be fear motivated, having had minimal contact in the past with their own species and therefore by building a good association towards other dogs, you can build the dog's confidence. Ensure that the other dogs are friendly and passive. Use friends to help you overcome your dog's fear towards other animals and don't leave it to chance that the dog you meet in the street will be friendly. Remember that if your dog has been kept as a solitary animal in a sterile environment he is unlikely to recognise another dog as one of his own species and have very little in the way of dog language skills. This is the combination of body language, facial expression, use of tail and ears that your dog uses to communicate with other dogs. Without practice he will not be able to communicate himself or read the intentions of other dogs. Because of his unsure start in life he is now reliant on you to assist with this period of adjustment.

If you use a training class to help build your dog's confidence, it is essential you find a training class that is suitable for your dog. By taking him to the wrong class, this could potentially compound his fear. I would suggest that you should view any class you intend to take him along to, in the first instance without the dog, to make sure it meets your criteria.

Whilst on walks and you come across other dogs or strange objects, it would be best to adopt a reward approach for the best responses. This can be with the use of food treats or the dogs favourite toy is produced whilst the dog is remaining calm and relaxed. This should begin when the other dog or object, is at a distance that your dog can tolerate and over the coming weeks expect the distance to reduce. Remain positive and confident.