

## Lead Reactivity 101

Lead reactivity is a common problem and means different things for different dogs. This free PDF covers a few key topics, but you can ask further questions and book training sessions at [www.aboutyourdog.info](http://www.aboutyourdog.info).

**Disclaimer:** This help sheet will provide some management ideas, but is not designed as a replacement for diagnosis and treatment of your dog's behaviour concerns.

### Equipment

Different people will have differing opinions on what equipment to use, but the scientific literature tells us that applying pain or intimidation tactics to a dog is a recipe for disaster in the long run, particularly where reactivity is concerned. That's why you will never see me use a slip lead, prong collar or any other aversive equipment to work on reactivity.

Instead, I recommend:

- A "Y front" harness with a chest and back connection point (e.g. *Perfect Fit* seen right)
- A double ended lead fitted at both connection points
- A muzzle if appropriate (see below)

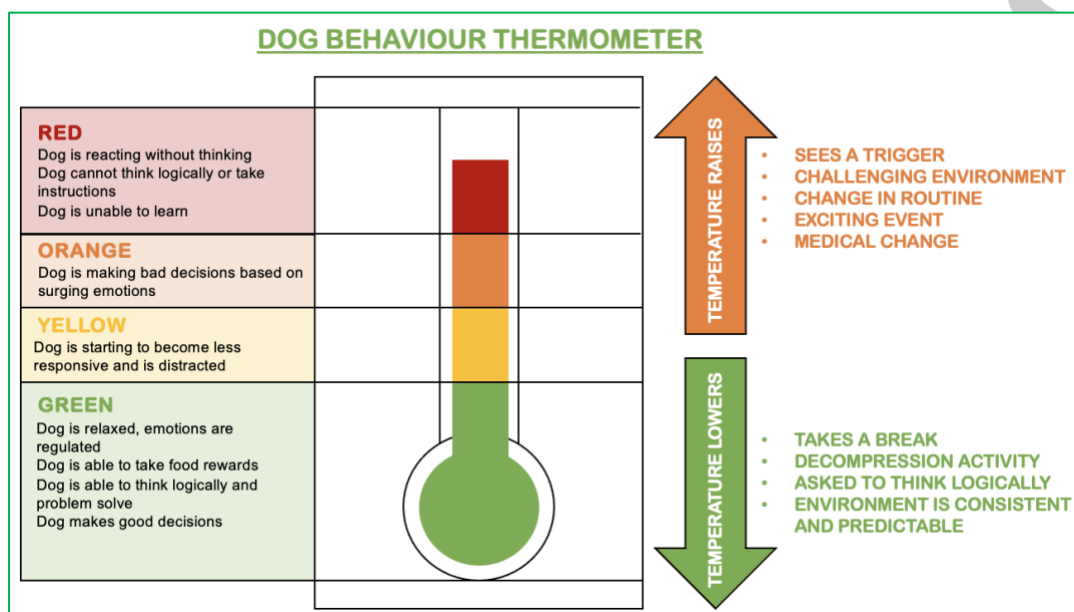


### Muzzle training

Even if your dog has never bitten or tried to bite it's responsible practice to teach muzzle training. A well-fitting basket muzzle will still allow your dog to pant, drink water and take treats. See my muzzle training guide on the following page.

### Understanding threshold

In order to get the best out of your dog you need them to be ready to learn when you take them out. The Dog Behaviour Thermometer (below) will help you to understand what 'temperature' your dog is at when you take them out. If your dog strays upward of 'Yellow' you should follow the downward arrow to bring your dog back into the 'Green' zone. Continuing to push ahead will only raise the temperature.



### Setting up for success (choosing your environment)

To work through any exercises you need your dog to be in the 'Green' zone (refer to the thermometer above). One of the biggest reasons your dog might be outside of that zone is likely to be the environment, meaning their immediate surroundings. Start with calm, known environments with very little distraction – such as a supermarket car park in the evening. With time you can start to build on the environment a step at a time by gradually introducing more challenges. Distance is key, so always choose places with lots of space away from your dog's triggers.

### People watching

A simple activity you can do to improve your dog's tolerance is watching their trigger from a distance. You can do this from a car, or from a park bench, or even from the end of your driveway. You should be far enough away that they can watch calmly with minimal reaction, and so that they can take food from you as a reward for their good choices.

### Top 3 resources

1. The Culture Clash – Jean Donaldson
2. Fight! – Jean Donaldson
3. Mission Control – Jane Arden

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