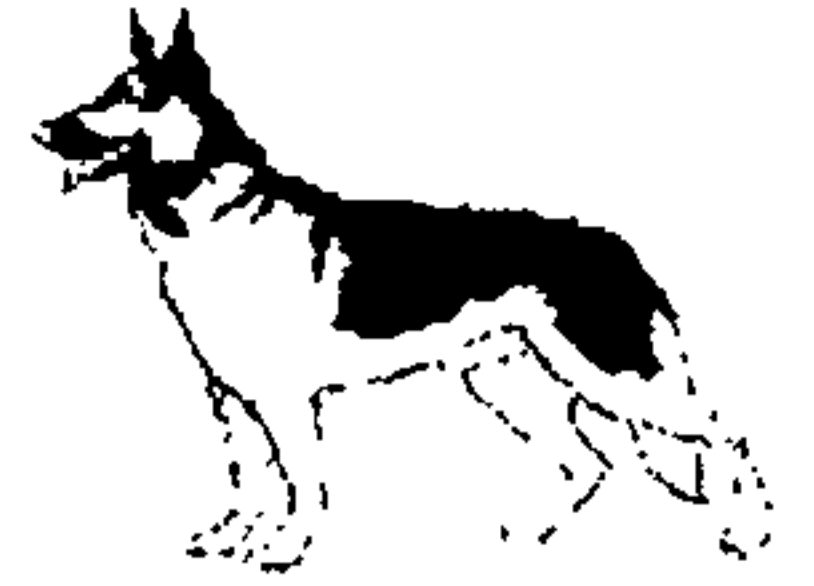


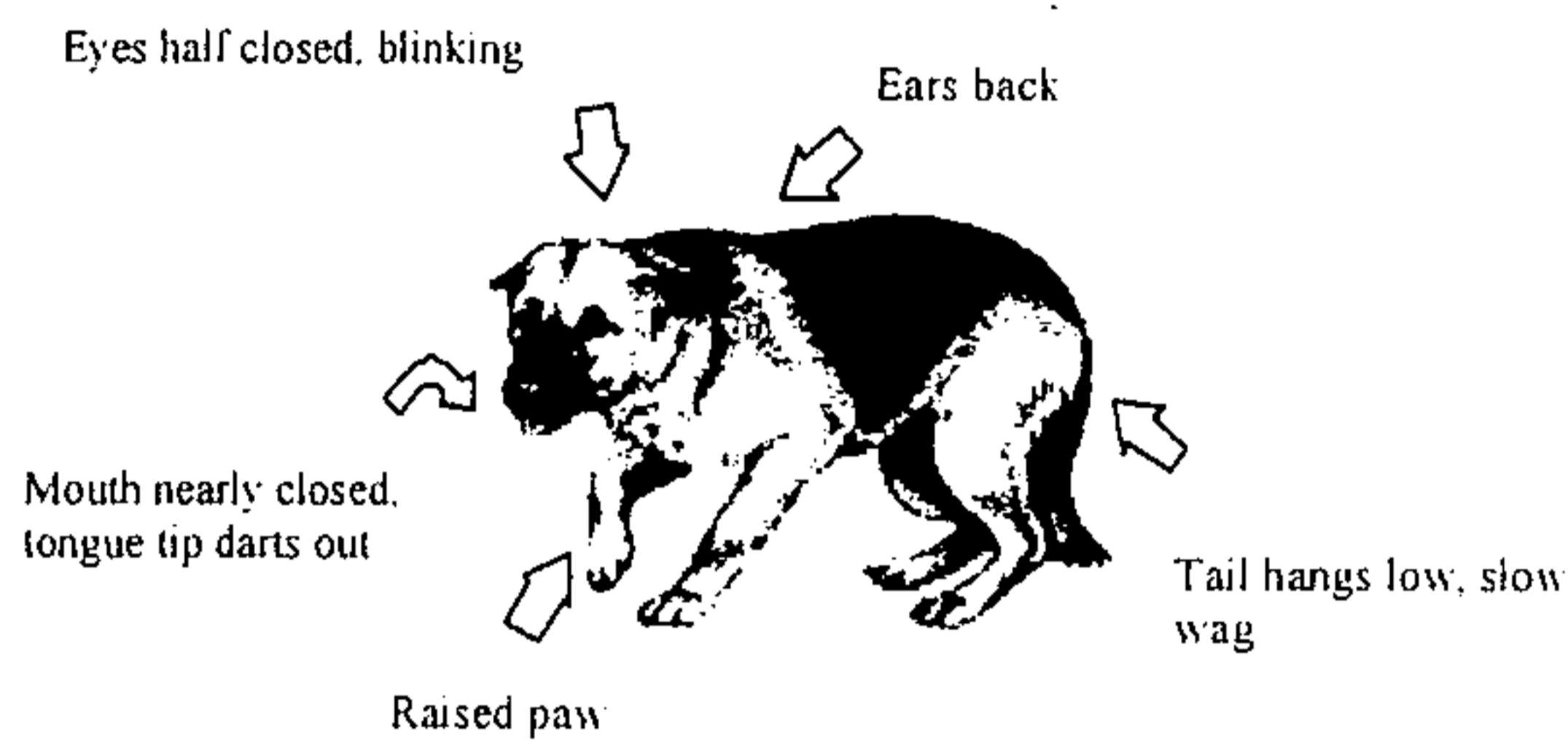


Maricopa County Animal Care & Control



Reading Canine Body Postures Dog To Dog

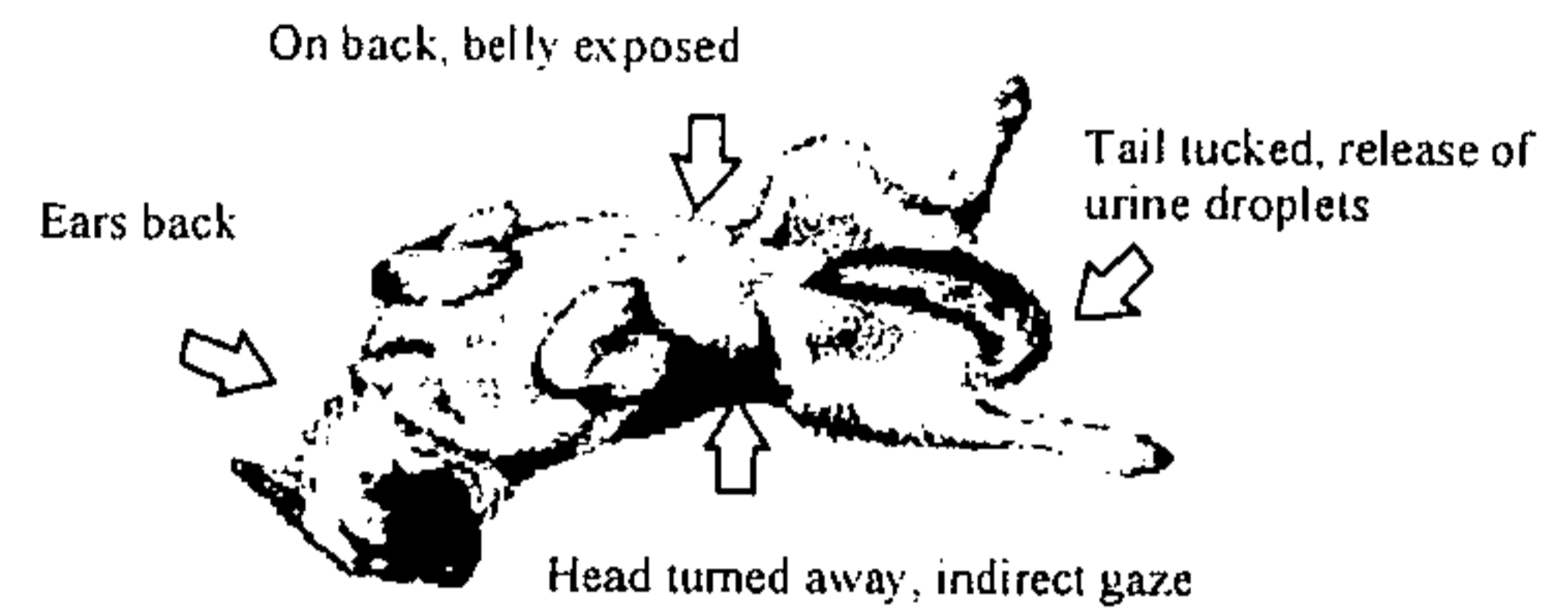
When dog meets dog, they signal their status in relation to each other. Actions like raising a forepaw, looking away, licking or nudging at the other's muzzle or bowing with the forelegs are submissive gestures. Mounting, raising up stiffly on one's toes, or placing one's head over another's withers (the place where the neck meets the back) indicate the more dominant individual of that interaction.



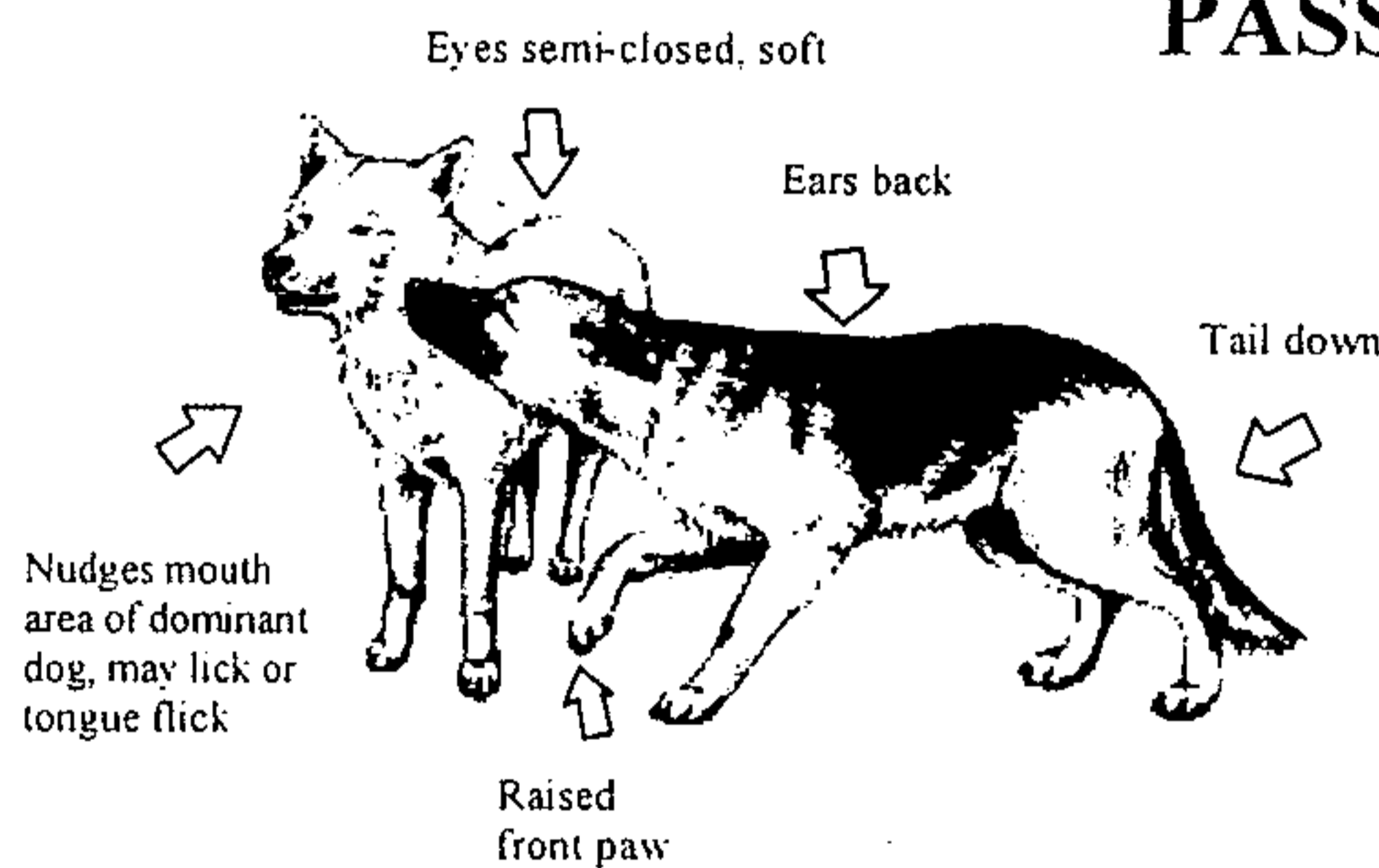
ACTIVE SUBMISSION

This pacifying posture is used when a dog acknowledges another dog or human's higher social ranking, or to inhibit another's aggression.

Bellying up indicates surrender, a pacifying gesture offered to a more dominant or aggressive individual.



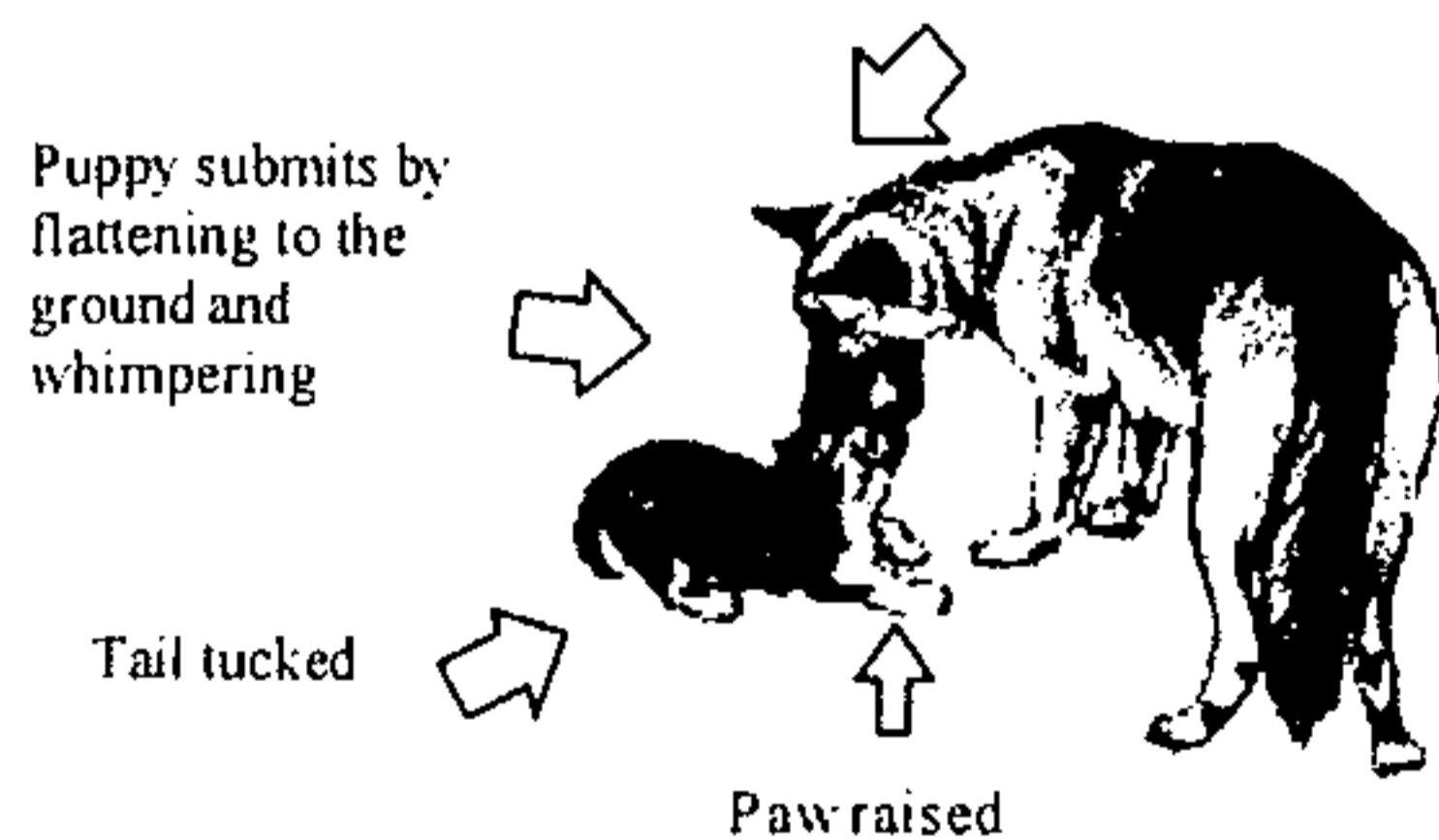
PASSIVE SUBMISSION



GREETING BEHAVIOR

A submissive dog may greet a more dominant dog with a muzzle nudge as an appeasement (pacifying) gesture.

Mother quickly snarls and places mouth around muzzle or head of puppy



MATERNAL CORRECTION

A mother dog will discipline a pup with a quick muzzle grasp. The pup learns to offer submissive body postures.

Ears and tail up forward and alert in the more dominant dog



GREETING POSTURE

Dogs sniff each other's genital region when greeting to gather information on sexual status.

For more information on animal care, behavior or AC&C programs contact (602) 506-PETS or visit pets.maricopa.gov



CALMING SIGNALS

(Body Language That Dogs Exhibit When Stressed - To Calm Themselves or Appease Others)

Dogs use calming or “cutoff” signals (also called displacement behaviors) to calm down or cease aggression/reduce stress in their environment. The signals are used at an early state to prevent things from happening, avoiding threats from people and dogs, calming down nervousness, fear, noise and unpleasant stimulus. The signals are used for calming themselves when they feel stressed or uneasy. The signals are used to make the others involved feel safer and understand that intentions are of goodwill. They are used to make friends with other dogs and people. Dogs have strong instincts for conflict solving, communication and cooperation.

Dogs also have threatening signals, and when we are dealing with dogs we have a choice of how to behave: We can be calming, friendly, reassuring, or we can be threatening. Whatever we choose will have consequences in our relationship with our dog. When you are using threats to your dog, intentionally or unintentionally, the dog will try to calm you down. For the conflict solving dog, threats must be calmed down. So, it is to the benefit in our relationship with our dog to understand these signals, and to use them ourselves to increase the communication level we have with our dog.

Identifying Some of the Signals:

Head:

1. Turning head to the side (either quickly or holding it there)
 - You can use it yourself when a dog starts to get worried or frightened upon approach
2. Not turning the head but averting the eyes to avoid direct eye contact
 - You can use when dog approaches you and you have difficulties turning your head for some reason.
3. Lowering lids, and not staring in a threatening way

Turning Away:

1. Turning the side or back to someone is very calming. When dogs are playing wildly, some of them will start turning their side or back in between playing, to make things calm down a bit.
 - You can use it when a dog shows signs of nervousness or aggressiveness toward you. If he jumps at you, turn away, and he will usually stop.
 - If your dog is being overwhelming with its jumping and nagging, turn your back on the dog.

Licking Nose:

1. A very quick movement of the tongue, so quick that sometimes it is hard to see as a calming signal.

Freezing:

1. Your dog will freeze, stop, stand sit or lie still, without moving a muscle when a much bigger dog comes up too close and starts sniffing him/her all over.

Walking Slowly, Using Slow Movements:

1. Movements that get slower, sometimes so slow there is hardly any movement have a very calming effect.
 - You can use it when a dog seems frightened of you, or when you do not want to scare a dog. When you go up to a dog that you want to put a leash on, moving slowly will help it to stand still.

Play Position:

1. Going down with front legs in a bowing position (if the dog is still and stays in that position for a few seconds, this is a calming signal).
 - You can use it by stretching your arms, like when you yawn, but stretch down.

Sitting:

1. Either turning back to you while sitting down, or just sitting down when a dog is approaching is a signal.
 - You can use it. Sit when your dog is stressed and cannot relax. Make your guests sit down if you have a dog who is not quite sure about strangers.

Down:

1. Lying down with belly up is submission. Lying down with belly to the ground is a calming signal. It is a very strong one, often used by high ranking dogs.
 - You can use it when your dog is stressed and nagging you. Lie down on the sofa. When a dog is feeling scared of you and not daring to come closer, lie down.

Yawning:

1. Your dog may yawn when you go into the vet's office, when you fight or quarrel in the family, when you hold your dog too tight, and in a lot of other situations.
 - You can use it when your dog feels uncertain, nervous, worried, or when you want him to calm down.

Sniffing:

1. Sniffing can be swift movement down to the ground or floor and up again, or it can be persistently standing there for some time until the problem situation is over. Since dogs also sniff for the sake of sniffing, one has to see the whole situation to be sure what it is.
 - You CANNOT really use it. It just isn't practical for us.

Splitting Up:

1. Going physically between dogs or people is a signal. When dogs or humans or a dog and a human get too close and the situation might become tense, many dogs go between to split up and avoid conflict from occurring.
 - You can use it when dogs get tense, when your dog gets uneasy or frightened in a situation, when dogs you are familiar with are displaying aggressive signals toward each other, or when children do things to dogs that make them feel uneasy.

Wagging Tail:

1. A wagging tail is not always a sign of happiness. You must look at the whole dog. If the dog is crawling towards you, whining and peeing, the wagging tail is a "flag" trying to make you calm down. Usually a calming signal wag is very quick and erratic.

Scratching:

1. This can be used as a calming signal.

Shaking Off:

1. This can be used as a calming signal.

HOW IT WORKS:

Dogs get stressed in situations of threat, pain or discomfort. They get stressed when we are angry or punish them. They get stressed by excitement. When they are stressed by the environment, they will start using calming signals to try to ease the stress. Knowing these signals will help us identify when a dog is stressed and take action to relieve the stress the dog is experiencing. You may remove the dog from the situation, give him something else to think about (i.e., sit, come or give him a toy), or have the person avoid direct eye contact or move away if the person is the source of the stress.

WHAT MAKES A DOG STRESSED?

1. direct threats (by us or other dogs)
2. violence, anger, aggression in his environment
3. jerking at the lead, pushing him down, pulling him along
4. too high demands in training and daily life
5. too much exercise for young dogs
6. too little exercise and activity
7. hunger, thirst
8. not having access to his toilet area when he needs it
9. freezing or being too hot
10. pain and illness
11. too much noise
12. being alone
13. sudden scary situations

14. too much overexcited playing, with balls or other dogs
15. never being able to relax, always being disturbed
16. sudden changes
17. not able to calm down, restlessness
18. overreaction to things happening (for instance the doorbell, a dog coming)
19. use of calming signals
20. scratching
21. biting themselves
22. biting and chewing furniture and shoes and other things
23. barking, howling, whining
24. diarrhea
25. smells bad, both mouth and body
26. tense muscles
27. shaking
28. change of eye color
29. licking self
30. running after tail
31. looks unhealthy
32. loses appetite
33. going to the bathroom more often than normal
34. allergies - many allergies are really stress
35. scratching
36. fixation on certain things - flies, crackling of firewood, glimpses of light
37. looking nervous
38. behaving aggressively
39. using displacement behavior when you ask him to do something

SOME THINGS WE CAN DO ABOUT STRESS IN OUR DOGS:

1. Maybe change environments and routines
2. We can stop using harsh methods, violence and painful things in training and handling. There is no excuse for it, and the dog's reaction to it shows us how valueless it is.
3. We can teach ourselves to see, identify and use calming signals.
4. We can avoid putting the dog in a situation of hunger, thirst, heat, extreme cold or keep him from going to the bathroom as often as he needs to
5. Try to find your dog's balance of exercise and activity - too much or too little might be bad
6. Let the dog be part of his pack as much as possible (with you) gradually teach him to accept some loneliness
7. Closeness, touching, massage, being tight together without being held by force - lying tight together is stress-releasing for puppies, maybe also for your dog

THE CHOICE IS YOURS:

1. When you are with a dog or meeting a dog you have the choice, you can be threatening or calming.
2. Dogs are conflict solvers, and they try to solve conflicts in their environment all the time. That we continuously start conflicts is really scary to dogs, and it tells them what weak individuals we are.

IN PRACTICAL HANDLING AND TRAINING:

1. Do not bend over the dog when teaching sit, down or when you call the dog to you.
2. Do not stoop or go towards the dog when it is coming toward you. Stand upright.
3. Do not jerk or use a tight leash when commanding your dog to heel. Use treats/toys or clap your side to get the dog to be with you (along with praise!).
4. Do not hold a dog tightly to you. He can learn to accept it, but that has to be done gradually.
5. The good things are: side to the dog, if you have to get low, don't bend over, but bend your knees instead. Never try to hug a dog you don't know very well.
6. A dog should not feel threatened while doing things for you.