



We continually update our skills and knowledge so that we stay current with the best practices that can help you and your dog.

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Issue 29

A World of Dogs: A Dog's World View

How often have you found yourself thinking your dog is sad because he gazes at you with mournful eyes; that a sigh signals boredom? We're prone to anthropomorphising animals, *i.e.* attributing human characteristics and behaviour to them. It's hard not to, because our ability to imagine what a dog might want is limited by our knowledge of a dog's experience of the world. Not that dogs don't have feelings or thoughts; they surely do. We get into unfortunate territory when we interpret canine expressions and behaviour by our own standards and then proceed to scold, comfort, discipline, outfit, or medicate our dogs based on our faulty assumptions. Despite the best of intentions, we might do more harm than good — or at least miss the mark by a mile.



How can we adopt a more canine perspective? A good first step would be to better understand what the world looks like to dogs. Take their sense of smell. It's not just that dogs pick up more with their two to three hundred million scent receptors than we with our measly six million, or that the very mechanics of their noses are so different from ours. Rather, a dog's whole



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Dog quotes

“Happiness is a warm puppy.” –Charles M. Schulz

cont.

.... A dog's world view

world is a web of complex smells. Objects are first assessed not by handling but by sniffing. Time is a matter of smell — strong means new, weak means old, older, ancient. We humans each have our own signature odour, as distinct to a dog as a fingerprint to the police - hence the sniffer dogs' ability to track a person's route through a crowded street - days, or even weeks, later. They track a cloud of molecules.

A dog's world is fascinating, and you don't need a degree in ethology or animal behaviour to explore it. Books by Temple Grandin, Alexandra Horowitz, or Jean Donaldson can serve as excellent initiations into the world of dogs. After all, as nature writer and essayist Edward Hoagland said, "In order to really enjoy a dog, one doesn't merely try to train him to be semi-human. The point of it is to open oneself to the possibility of becoming partly a dog."



Did You Know: Why Dogs Lick Their Wounds?

It's common practice. Every dog — and most animals in general — instinctively want to lick their wounds, and the reflex was a sound one in times before gauze sponges and disinfectants.

Healing saliva? The idea that canine saliva contains healing properties is widely held; it's even part of the myths of some ancient societies such as Mesopotamia. But is it fact or fiction? Well, it's somewhat factual. Dog saliva is slightly bactericidal against *Escherichia coli* and *Streptococcus canis*, but modern medicine is far more effective.

The downside. In today's world of soap, surgical stitching, and antibacterial wound care, wound licking can cause more harm than good. It can lead to irritation and infection and may slow the healing process.

Bottom line. Don't put your dog at risk. Follow your veterinarian's advice, keep wound care products on hand, and discourage your dog from licking her wounds by putting an Elizabethan hood (e-hood) on her.



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