



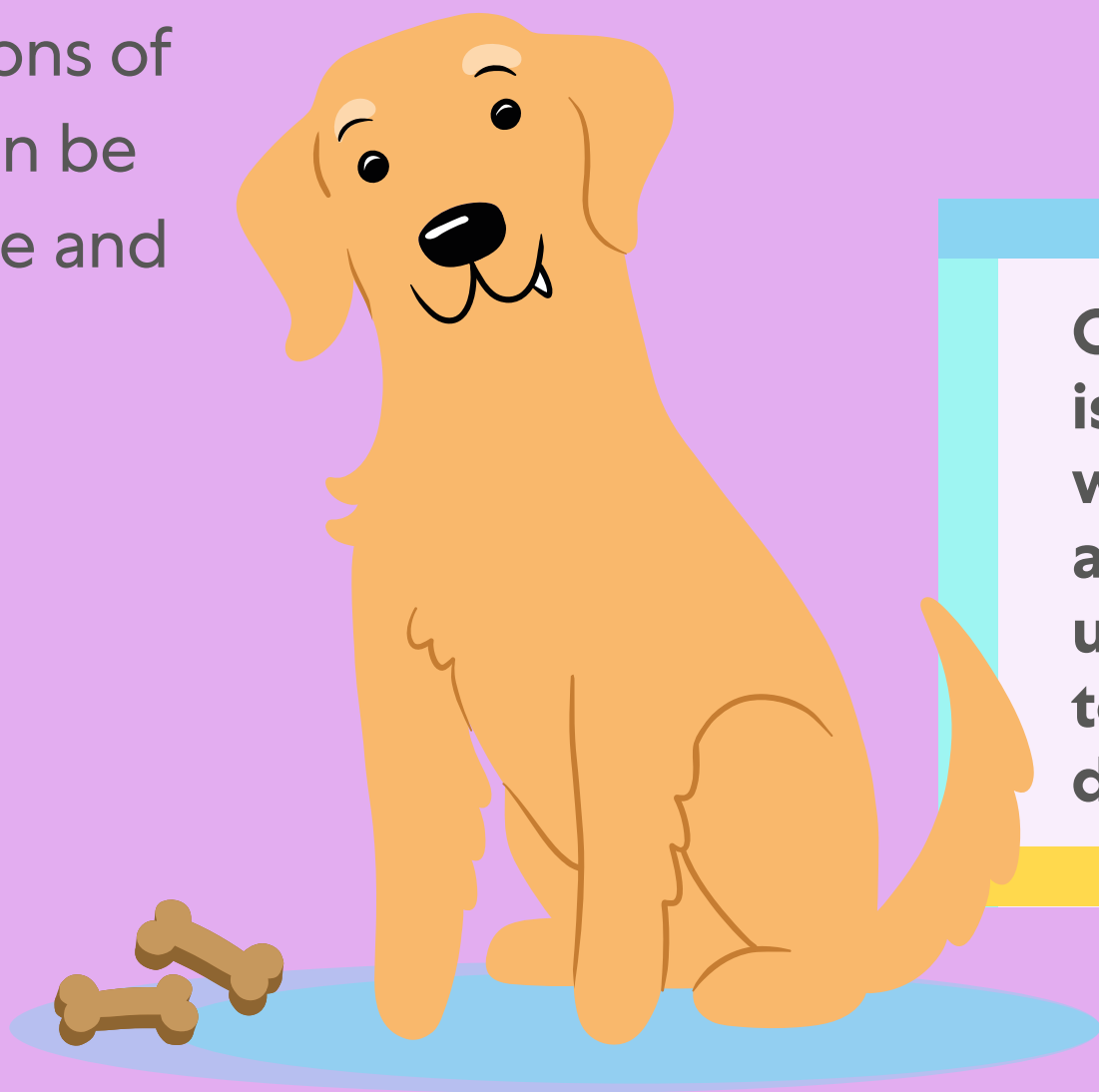
Dog Health

Your dog's behaviour and emotional health

Behaviour is the way your dog responds to a particular stimulus or situation. Every interaction with your dog should be considered part of their training process and contribute to their wellbeing. Consistency is key in both your cues and responses to make sure your dog is not frustrated and understands clearly what is expected of them.

Rewarding good behaviour

It is important to seek advice early on from reputable sources so you and your dog can learn the best way to interact with each other. Behaviours that are positively reinforced (followed by something good such as being given a treat or praise) are more likely to continue in future. Although punishment-based methods may work to alter behaviour, the repercussions of using such approaches can be detrimental to dog welfare and the human-pet bond.^{1,2}



Our job as caregivers is to teach our dogs which behaviours are acceptable and set up an environment to encourage those desirable behaviours



¹Journal of Veterinary Behavior, Volume 19, May-June 2017, Pages 50-60 The effects of using aversive training methods in dogs—A review -ScienceDirectAccessed 01 April 2022

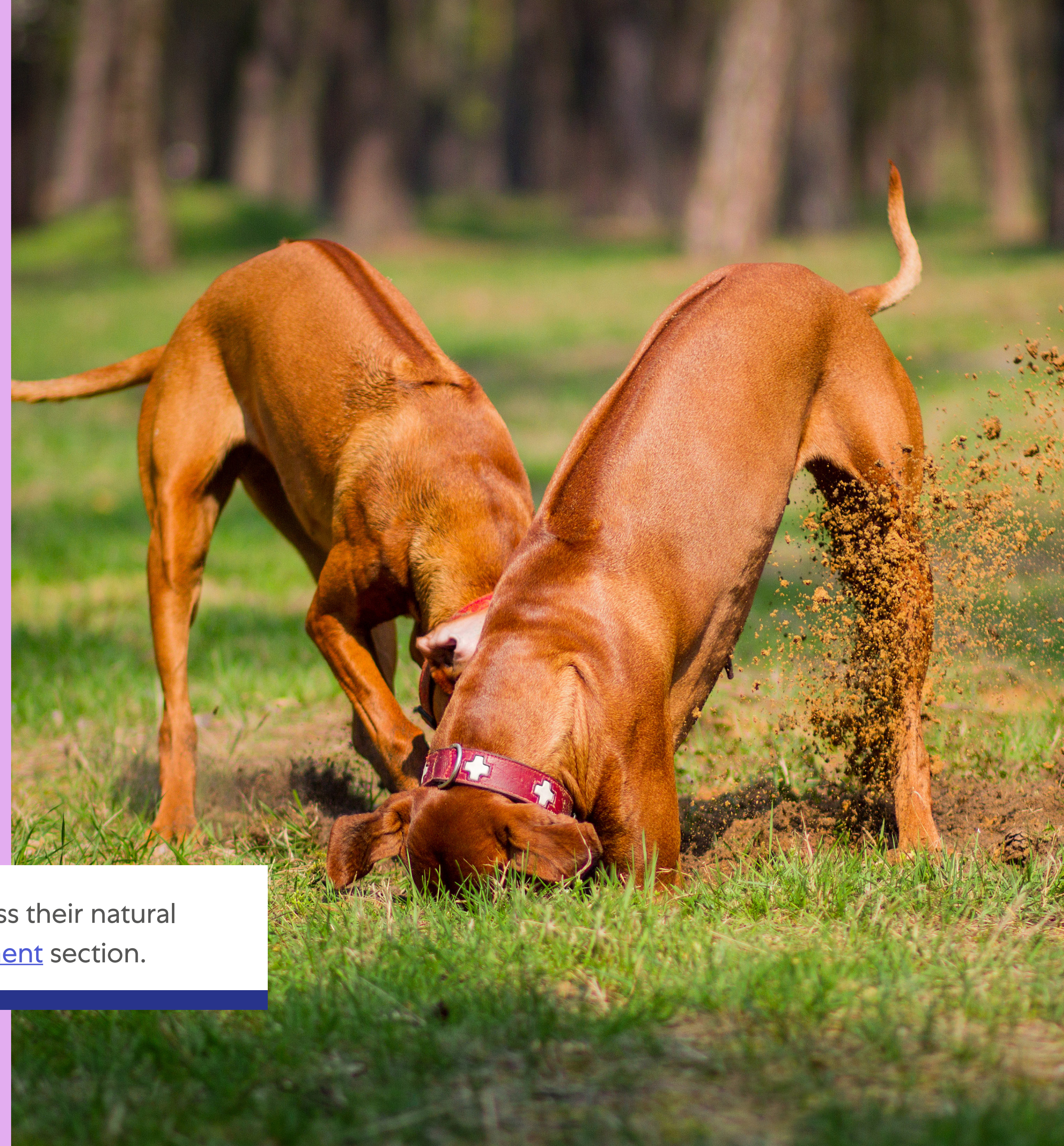
²Gal Ziv, The effects of using aversive training methods in dogs—A review, Journal of Veterinary Behavior, Volume 19, 2017, Pages 50-60,ISSN 1558-7878,<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jveb.2017.02.004>.

Recognising potential problems

Once established, many behaviour problems become more difficult to manage. This can put a strain on the bond you have with your dog, which is another reason why prevention is always better than cure. It is also worth noting that there is research to suggest that many problem behaviours are caused by pain a pet may be experiencing.³ Therefore, prior to embarking on any form of behaviour modification, it is important to rule out any underlying medical issues with your veterinarian.

Remember that certain behaviours that we might find less desirable are normal and natural for your dog such as digging, chewing and barking. So, it's important to provide an outlet that's acceptable for both of you. For example, providing chew toys or dental treats rather than your favourite pair of shoes!

For more information on how you can help your dog express their natural behaviours in their home environment, see our [Environment](#) section.





Dog training

It's important that you seek professional advice from a qualified pet behaviourist and/or trainer as soon as possible.

When choosing a trainer or behaviourist, look for practitioners that are registered members of professional associations that meet current scientific and evidence-based behaviour and training standards, see below:

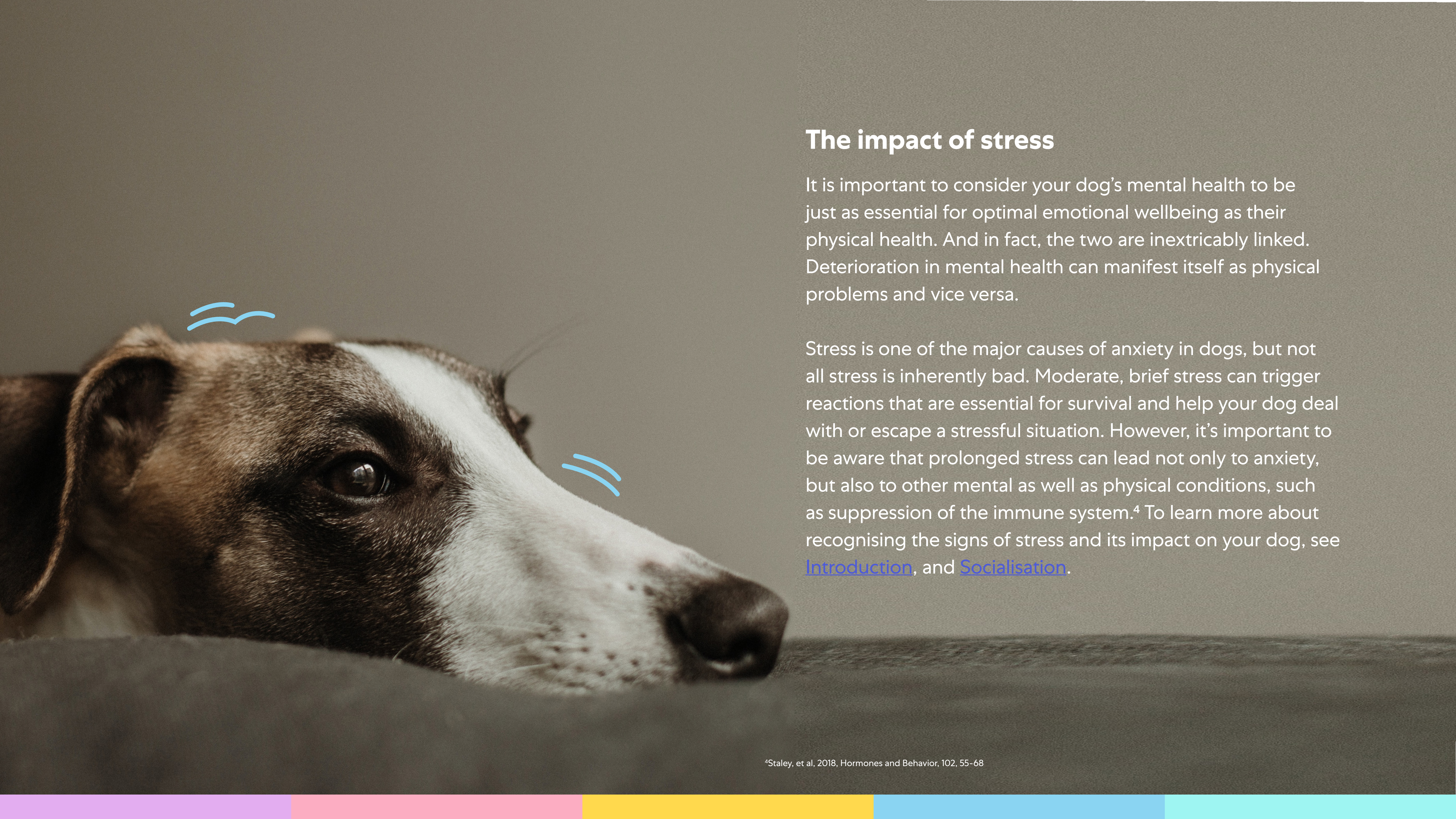
[International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants](#)

[Fellowship of Animal Behaviour Clinicians](#)

[Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors \(International\)](#)

[Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists \(America\)](#)

[American College of Veterinary Behaviorists](#)



The impact of stress

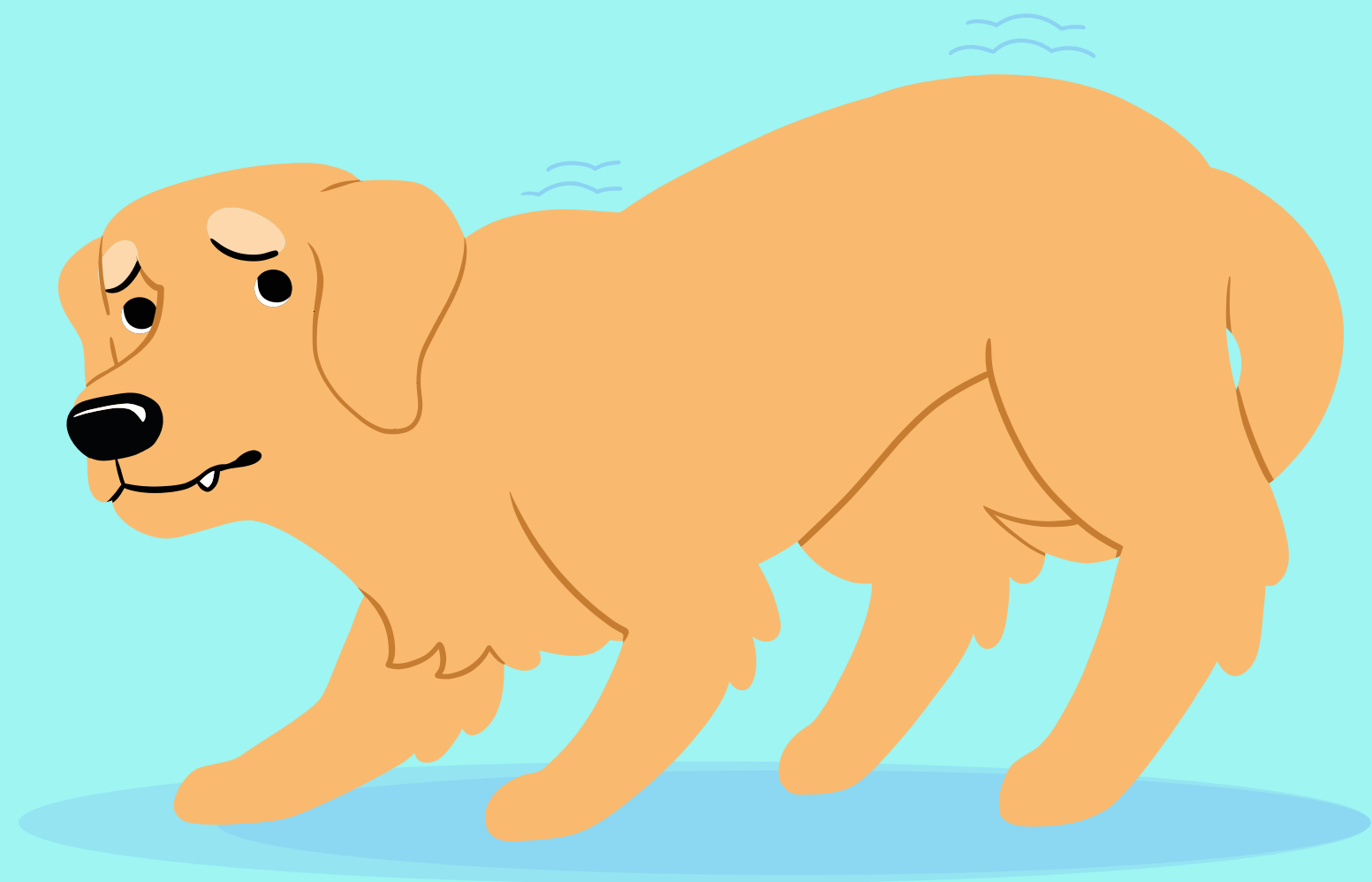
It is important to consider your dog's mental health to be just as essential for optimal emotional wellbeing as their physical health. And in fact, the two are inextricably linked. Deterioration in mental health can manifest itself as physical problems and vice versa.

Stress is one of the major causes of anxiety in dogs, but not all stress is inherently bad. Moderate, brief stress can trigger reactions that are essential for survival and help your dog deal with or escape a stressful situation. However, it's important to be aware that prolonged stress can lead not only to anxiety, but also to other mental as well as physical conditions, such as suppression of the immune system.⁴ To learn more about recognising the signs of stress and its impact on your dog, see [Introduction](#), and [Socialisation](#).

⁴Staley, et al, 2018, Hormones and Behavior, 102, 55-68

Creating the right environment

Your dog's environment plays a big role in contributing to stress and anxiety, especially when it is unpredictable. Multi-pet households, limited access to essential resources (e.g., food, water, resting places), noisy children, interactions with other dogs, training approaches, family disruptions, and moving to a new house can all be sources of environmental stress (See [Environment](#)).



Behavioural Issues

Failing to address situations that negatively impact your dog's mental health may lead to behavioural problems that could compromise your dog's quality of life and put a strain on the human-dog bond. A scared or anxious dog may behave aggressively and growl or bite (fight) if they are unable to escape from a stressful situation (flight).

Studies have shown that up to 65% of dogs sent to shelters were relinquished for behaviour problems.⁵ Aggression, excessive vocalisations and destructiveness are common reasons given.⁶ It is important, therefore, that these issues are prevented where possible.



⁵Jennifer, Y, .Kwan & Melissa, J, Bain (2013) Owner Attachment and Problem Behaviors Related to Relinquishment and Training Techniques of Dogs,Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science,16:2,168-183,DOI:10.1080/10888705.2013.768923

⁶Powdrill-Wells, N, Taylor, S, Melfi, V, Reducing Dog Relinquishment to Rescue Centres Due to Behaviour Problems: Identifying Cases to Target with an Advice Intervention at the Point of Relinquishment Request.Animals2021,11, 2766. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani11102766>



Research suggests that simple actions like calm petting can reduce certain indicators of stress in dogs⁷

Reducing stress

Stress also activates a physical response, triggering the release of substances such as steroid hormones, adrenaline, neurotransmitters, and biological regulators that can lead to inflammation and pain.

There are ways in which you can help reduce stress in dogs. Recognise when they are uncomfortable and alter the environment to help them feel less threatened. This may mean removing them from certain situations or managing the home environment to help them feel more safe and secure.



⁷Crista L. Coppola, Temple Grandin, R. Mark Enns, Human interaction and cortisol: Can human contact reduce stress for shelter dogs?, Physiology & Behavior, Volume 87, Issue 3, 2006, Pages 537-541

Changing your dog's behaviour

If you are wanting to change your dog's behaviour or teach a new one, it is important that you utilise evidence-based approaches to behaviour modification and training (refer to 'training approaches' section in [Socialisation](#) for more information).

Unfortunately, the dog training industry is largely unregulated so anyone can provide training advice and employ methods which may negatively impact your dog's wellbeing, as well as damage the relationship you have with your dog. In some situations, it can make the behavioural problems worse. Before you start any training, be sure to rule out any underlying medical issues your dog may have with your veterinarian.

Learn more about health and emotional wellbeing for your pets at shine.waltham.com

