ZOEY'S PAW PRINTS

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The Science Behind Why Dogs Lick

Both licking and chewing are two of the most natural behaviors beginning in puppyhood and lasting throughout the rest of your dog's life. Keep reading to learn more about these instinctual K9 behaviors!

Licking and Chewing: The Facts

From the moment a puppy is born - and throughout his life - using his mouth will be a crucial part of his daily life, along with his nose and tongue, to interact with his mother, littermates and his overall world.

Appropriate licking includes:

- Exploring their world, especially as a young puppy; also known as "information gathering."
- Normal self-grooming.
- Self-soothing from boredom, loneliness, anxiety or stress.
- Enjoying the taste of what they are licking or chewing, such as salt in human sweat, residual food smells, skincare products, and natural oils, can attract your dog's attention **and** tongue!
- Natural communication, affection, bonding, excitement, attention-seeking, appeasement or submission. It's also a way for a dog to manage their emotions with the natural release of calming chemicals in their brain. These behaviors can be reinforced from an early age with positive reactions from their humans.

Remember, these behaviors are **all normal for your dog** and they should **never** be disciplined for these naturally occurring behaviors. However, you can train your dog to redirect or stop these behaviors with positive reinforcement training.

When Licking Needs Attention!

When licking or chewing becomes **compulsive**, **obsessive** or **self-harming,** it's time to intervene! Never ignore persistent, non-stop licking as it can lead to serious and unwanted medical issues. Contact a local dog behaviorist or vet for professional help to redirect or resolve persistent licking.

Learn more on the reverse side under "K9 Body Language 101."

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Your Dog's Behavior and Beyond

Calm is a Skill: Teach Regulation Before it's Needed

Real calmness is when a dog feels regulated and balanced. It's when they can recover from excitement or stress and return to a state of ease, whether they're sniffing outside, playing gently, or curling up for a nap.

Learn how to teach your dog's nervous system to "learn, behave and recover" from Canine Zen!

Dear Zoey ...

My dog is getting older and doesn't seem as playful as she used to be. Is this normal?
Missing the Zoomies

Dear Missing,
As much as I'd like to believe we're all puppies forever, age does catch up with us. It's normal for senior dogs to slow down, but joint stiffness, muscle loss, and extra weight make it even harder to stay active.

The good news? *Quality nutrition can help. A diet higher in quality protein, combined with maintaining a healthy weight, can help keep muscles strong and support an active lifestyle. And don't forget those aging joints! The right joint support can help keep us moving comfortably.*

With good nutrition, regular exercise, and extra support, many senior dogs still enjoy walks, adventures, and even the occasional zoomie!

Life's Abundance Weight Loss Formula: Higher-quality protein supports lean muscle while fewer calories help your dog maintain a healthy weight.

Life's Abundance Agility Formula: Green-Lipped Sea Mussels plus other joint-supporting ingredients help keep hips and joints healthy.

Disclaimer: *This information does not constitute professional veterinary advice. Always work with your regular licensed vet for your dog, their medical history, overall condition, age and breed.*

When Your Dog's Licking Becomes an Issue

All dogs lick and usually it's a normal and natural behavior. However, some dogs may lick too much which may require intervention especially if there is an underlying medical cause like the six common ones below.

Source: Pets Best Pet Insurance

K9 Body Language101: Obsessive Licking

Normal licking is where the dog licks both paws equally or another area occasionally and there is **no irritation** afterward. In contrast, obsessive and persistent licking is **not normal** and should **never** be ignored.

Common behavioral reasons for a dog's compulsive paw licking include: boredom, stress, anxiety or canine OCD.

These behaviors do not resolve on their own, so seek the expertise of a dog behaviorist as soon as possible.

Image Courtesy: Ann Perkas/Pexels.com

In contrast, **compulsive/obsessive licking** includes focus on one paw or spot, signs of redness, irritation, open sores or scabs, odor, excessive hair loss, swelling or licking that interrupts activity or sleeping. **Seek your veterinarian's help immediately!**

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How to Treat Itchy Dog Paws Naturally

Dryness, humidity, allergies, infections, bacteria, pain or injury, parasites, and anxiety or stress can all cause your dog to obsessively lick and chew his paws for relief, which could make things worse. The simple and all-natural home remedies below can provide relief and healing.

Itchy Dog Paws: Natural Remedies

Rub into Paws:

- Coconut Oil
- Aloe Vera Gel
- Manuka Honey Balm
- Calendula Cream

Soaks:

- Oatmeal Soak
- Chamomile Tea
- Epson Salts
- Apple Cider Vinegar
- Dr. Becker's Paw Soak (April 2026 Issue)

NEVER apply essential oils on your dog **BEFORE** diluting them! The **recommended ratio** is one drop of essential oil to 50 drops of "carrier oil" such as coconut or olive oil.

Frozen and Nutritious Dog Treats!

Refreshing and hydrating treats can help your dog stay cool during the summer heat!

- Blend strawberries.
- Pour into your favorite paw molds, but leave some room at the top.
- Freeze for 30 minutes. Spoon plain, nonfat Greek yogurt on top of the frozen strawberries and press down with the back of the spoon.
- Add blueberries to the tops of the paw molds and press down into the yogurt.
- Freeze for a few hours and serve!

(Need to help your dog calm down? Add a few drops of calming oil on the top before freezing.)

Source: YouTube/MyDogsDope

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