

Angelic Dogs



Through your dog's eyes....

My world.....

Our dogs are probably the only animals expected to think and act like people rather than animals. They are expected to prefer people and to defer to our wishes at all times no matter what is going on around them. We also expect them to already know how to be the perfect companion, unfortunately these high demands placed on our dogs can lead to a very stressful life for them and us.

Dogs are only perfect at being dogs and their individual selves.

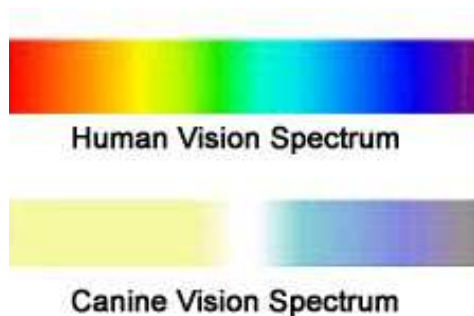
So lets see briefly how our dogs see their world and maybe through taking time out to see things from their perspective we can understand more about why they do the sometimes bizarre things they do.



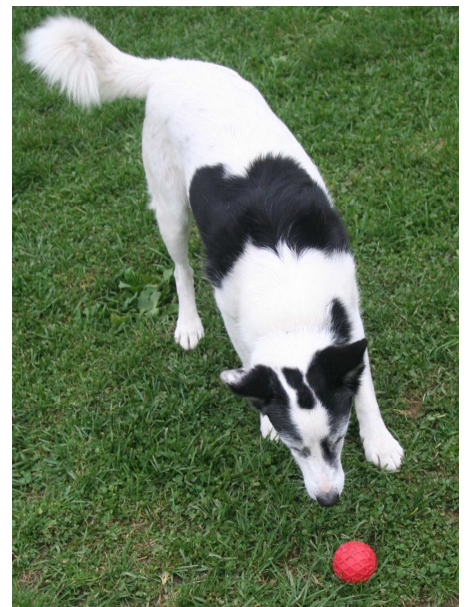
Our dog's mental representations of their world differs hugely to ours, living in a world of constant sensory information, what they perceive will be different to us due to the design of their sense organs.

For an animal, survival depends on the ability to detect movements, eye gaze and social signals of others in order to distinguish if they are prey, predators or mates and to anticipate future actions. How a dog senses their world still depends on this survival mechanism.

Our dogs have a larger area they can see than us, but this means they can not focus as well as us. Because their activities do not require them to be able to focus like we do, they rely more on motion, sounds and smells than detailed images. They are also much better at seeing when it is darker and much more sensitive to movement than we are. As far as seeing colour goes they are similar to a red-green colour blind person, they can perceive two wavelengths violet and violet-blue range.



When you look at the colour chart you can understand why your dog can find it difficult to find a red ball on the grass, as both red and green are seen as very similar shade to them. A blue ball would be much easier for them to find.



Our dogs will see things that we do not and we will see things they find difficult. A rabbit moving at 800-900m will be seen easier by our dogs than us and an object right under their nose we can see but they will be using their nose not their eyes to find it.

We can see things clearly at different distances, our dogs are not so good at this, this may explain some of the reactions we see from dogs when they are trying to work out what is going on.

High speed is seen as threatening to our dogs, explaining why some dogs may see joggers, bicycles and children approaching as a threat.

There are also differences between each breed depending on their head and eye shape. Those with long muzzles are able to see over wider area and detect movement better, than those with a short muzzle and prominent eyes, who see detail better.

Our dogs can hear well above the frequency range we can and can hear ultrasound. They are able to pinpoint the source of sound more precisely by moving their ear flaps towards the sound. For some dogs the fear of some household items may come from the sounds they can hear but we can not.

Because of how our dogs hear the beginning of words are more important to them, just giving the beginning of a cue will more than likely give you the same behaviour as the whole cue word. This is why your dog may do something else if you have cues that start with similar sounds.

As our words are driven by how we feel, how we say things convey a lot more information than the word itself. Think of the different ways you say your dogs name, with warmth as they nuzzle up to you or loud and high tone when you are worried about their safety and think about how your dog reacts to the different ways.

You can also use how they perceive sounds for calling your dog, they are more likely to move faster towards you with short, quick high frequency sounds than to longer notes of a lower frequency, which will work well for a sit and stay.



Our dogs sense of smell is very important to them and much more sensitive than ours. Our dogs use their sense of smell for recognising kin and other individuals, health status, reproductive status, and emotional state (playing a part in aggression and fear), mark and defend territories, find a mate and find food etc.

Our dogs can react to situations by using the odours we produce due to our emotional state, they will know if we are in control of a situation or whether their safety depends on them taking control.

This is just a very brief look at our dogs see their world but it can be seen that they are extremely good at noticing our different signals, from our tone of voice, facial and body language to chemical stimuli e.g. sweat and can understand the relevance of these signals. Their interpretation of everything will be based on whether it predicts safety or danger.

We need to remember that people and dogs think and process information differently, our dogs do not have the ability to verbally explain anything to anyone, they cannot read books on etiquette and they will never understand why we are irritated or what moral or ethical thing they could do to resolve the problem.