

This scale assesses behavior observed in the moment; it does not assess stable traits, nor should it be used to make statements about a dog's personality.

Fear may overlap with aggression. If a dog escalates to the point where there is concern for human safety, please refer to the Canine Risk Assessment.

### Excited, Playful, or Actively Interested

**Body:** Body is loose or relaxed. Tail wags at or above neutral position. Ears are forward or relaxed.

**Behavior:** Dog does not move hesitantly, startle or display signs of fear. Dog is excited about the environment and displays investigative behavior, playfulness/interest. May bounce, trot or run, "get the zoomies," explore (sniffing + movement) or scent mark. If furniture is present, dog may jump onto it or rub face/body against it. May roll around on the ground or floor.

When in the presence of a person or stimulus, the dog is excited about or interested (playful, actively seeks proximity to, or investigates the person or stimulus). The dog may maintain or increase proximity during leashing or handling. May be difficult to position for leashing or handling due to playfulness/excitement but does not display signs of fear.

### Neutral

**Body:** Body is loose or relaxed. Tail is held at or above neutral position and may wag a bit. Ears are forward or relaxed. Eyes have a soft gaze.

**Behavior:** Dog appears relaxed and does not move hesitantly, startle, or display signs of excitement, fear, or arousal. Dog may explore a bit (sniffing and movement) but does not do so most of the time. May sit or lie down in a comfortable position with muscles relaxed; walk or trot around; stand and look around; or air-scent. May look at or approach the exit once or twice but does not focus on it for most of the time.

When in the presence of a person or stimulus, the dog is aware but shows little interest. Does not show signs of fear or arousal and does not actively avoid the stimulus. Dog seems aware and accepts leashing or handling (does not become tense, flinch or attempt to move away). May look at, sniff, mouth, or lick a person's hand. May be a bit resistant to position for leashing or handling but does not display signs of fear or arousal.

### Mild Fear (FAS 1-2)

Note: FAS refers to the Fear Free Shelters® Spectrum of Fear, Anxiety, or Stress handout. FAS does not perfectly correlate with ASPCA's Fear Scale but has been loosely categorized within this scale for teams who routinely refer to FAS.

**Body:** Body is somewhat or intermittently tense. Tail is low and may or may not wag a bit; ears may be back. Posture may be lowered. May sit or lie down with tense muscles. Dog may assume a submissive posture (ears back, low and fast tail wag, may lick lips, lift paw or paw person, or submissively urinate).

**Behavior:** Dog displays mild hesitation, cautious, slow movement, mildly agitated movement, or brief immobility/inactivity. Dog seems vigilant and may focus attention on exiting/getting away. May briefly explore (sniffing + movement) or look around while air scenting. May startle but recovers quickly. May stress yawn, lip lick, fidget, pace, or scratch self.

When in the presence of a person or stimulus, the dog is aware and may show some interest (look at, sniff, mouth, or lick the person or stimulus). May be unwilling to approach but may watch or air-scent toward the person or stimulus or may vacillate between approach and avoidance. May freeze briefly or try to move or pull away in response to leashing or handling. May startle or flinch in response to touch but recover quickly.

### Moderate Fear (FAS 3-4)

**Body:** Dog's body is tense/rigid. Tail is low or tucked, ears are back, and eyes are wide. May crouch, sit in a hunched position, lie down with tense muscles, and/or tremble. Body weight may be distributed unevenly (stretching forward, leaning away).

**Behavior:** Dog seems aware of the environment but does not actively explore (sniffing + movement). May remain immobile or may move with significant/prolonged hesitation.

**Alternatively,** dog may pace, look for an escape route, or move in a very vigilant, nervous (but not panicked) manner. May be focused on the exit/getting away. May startle, showing poor recovery afterward, becoming more tense or agitated. When in the presence of a person or stimulus or when handled, dog seems aware but does not approach or actively avoids. May remain immobile and stiff, lean away, or may move away with significant/prolonged hesitation. May be resistant or difficult to position for leashing for the average person. May startle or flinch in response to touch, showing poor recovery afterward by becoming more tense or avoidant or by repeatedly flinching.

### Severe Fear (FAS 4-5)

**Body:** Dog's body is very tense/rigid. Tail is very low or tucked, ears are back, and eyes are wide. May crouch, flatten body against the ground, tremble, or pant heavily.

**Behavior:** Dog may be completely immobile for most of the time. May try to hide under or behind objects, or press their body against the wall or into a corner. May seem "stuck" in a position (sitting, standing in place, or lying down). May stare into space or appear to "fall asleep," especially when forced into close proximity with a person. May be catatonic (seeming completely unaware or unresponsive, standing, sitting, or lying in an expressionless, motionless state).

**Alternatively,** dog may show active avoidance, pacing, fleeing, or persistently seeking an escape route. May show extreme agitation or vigilance. May startle, showing no recovery afterward, becoming more tense or agitated. May scream. May crawl along the ground. May lose control of bladder or bowels or express anal glands. May vigorously attempt to escape. May be difficult or impossible for the average person to leash or position for handling, and the person may not be able to complete the activity with the dog.