

# Why Does Your Excited Pet Do His Happy Routine?

One of the best things about being a dog parent is watching your pet's adorable antics when he or she is excited. What does it mean when your pet puts something in his mouth when he's excited? Or prance around in her happy dance routine? How to help curtail behaviors if they go too far?

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Our canine companions have their own individual personalities and behaviors, many of which are highly entertaining
- While some amusing dog behaviors are harmless, others can pose a health risk
- One example of a cute and harmless behavior: some dogs habitually grab something to hold in their mouths when they're excited
- An example of a funny but risky behavior: counter surfing
- In addition to denying your dog access to the kitchen and dining room, you'll also want to redirect his energy with food puzzles or recreational bones and chews

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As every dog lover knows, our canine companions come equipped with their own distinct personalities and peculiarities. It's a wonderful adventure getting to know your dog and watching his personality unfold as he matures, in the case of a puppy, or as he adapts to life in your family, in the case of an adopted adult dog.

One of the best things about being a dog parent is watching the adorable and often hilarious antics performed by our four-legged family members. As many a pet owner has been heard to say, "This stuff just never gets old!"

## I'm So Excited, and I Just Can't Hide It!

For reasons known only to them, many dogs absolutely need to put something in their mouths when they're excited. If your dog does this, according to veterinary behaviorist Dr. Wailani Sung in an interview with Vetstreet, she may be:

- Offering a gift
- Looking for attention
- Showing she's happy

"I think some **dogs** are so excited to see a visitor because it may represent a new person who will play with him/her, so the dog grabs a toy to try to entice the person to play, whether it is **tug** or throwing the object," says Dr. Sung.<sup>1</sup>

Pet parents also sometimes teach the behavior to dogs as a replacement activity for barking or jumping up on people.

According to Sung, "... [these] owners have recognized that their dogs may appear anxious or worried, but if they get the dog engaged with their toys, they appear less concerned about new visitors in the house."

Sometimes a dog is just picking up on the excitement of his owner and responding in kind. Sung says it seems retrievers are especially fond of the behavior, which makes sense since they are, after all, "retrieving" something with their mouths.

## What if the Thing Your Dog Has in His Mouth Makes You Blush?

Occasionally, the "something" an excited dog grabs and parades around with is an item the owner would really prefer no one else see (use your imagination!). Obviously, it's best to make sure those things are inaccessible to your pet at all times.

However, stuff happens, so if you welcome a guest into your home and turn to see Buddy circling happily with your granny panties or your husband's Jockey shorts dangling from his mouth, head immediately for your dog treat stash. Keep your cool and quickly exchange the unmentionable for a yummy snack.

If for some reason darling Buddy is reluctant to make the trade, whatever you do, don't chase after him, as you could easily turn this into a really fun game for him, thereby dragging out the agony of your embarrassment indefinitely as he dashes through the house still holding your drawers in his mouth!

Embarrassing moments aside, most pups who grab things in their mouths when they're excited are just being their happy, adorable selves, so this isn't a behavior you need to worry about or extinguish. Just be sure not to leave anything priceless in your pet's path, and join in the fun!

## Funny but Risky Canine Behaviors

Unfortunately, there are also behaviors dogs perform that, while amusing, are dangerous. One of these is the **large dog** pastime known as counter surfing. (For the record, small dogs have been busted counter surfing as well, but always after a human has inadvertently provided them access to the counter.)

If your dog is guilty of this, you need to be vigilant about not leaving food items accessible on the counter, and keep an eye on your dog during mealtimes. As dog behavior expert Mikkell Becker writes in Vetstreet:

*"Every successfully stolen morsel of food increases the likelihood that your dog will continue his thieving ways in the future. In addition, the attention he receives for putting his paws up on the counter or trying to swipe a bite may itself be a reward — even if that attention is all negative.*

*Managing your dog's environment and channeling his energy into more acceptable behaviors can help to decrease your dog's scavenging attempts."*<sup>2</sup>

# Curbing a Counter Surfing Canine

It goes without saying that counter surfing can be risky for your dog. Not only might she eat something that makes her sick, she could also encounter a hot stove or a sharp knife. If your dog is a confirmed food thief, you'll need to do whatever it takes to block her access, including putting her in her crate, behind a baby gate or in a separate room at mealtime.

If necessary, you may also need to put locks on kitchen cabinets and drawers. It's important to keep in mind that many food-thieving dogs become expert at looking completely disinterested in what's happening in the kitchen or at the dinner table, when in reality they're waiting for the first opportunity to grab a snack.

In addition to denying your dog access to the kitchen and dining room, you'll also want to redirect his energy with food puzzles or recreational bones and chews. You can also train him to go to a specific spot, usually his dog bed, away from the kitchen and dining room, while meals are being prepared and eaten.

Finally, for those times when all your best efforts fail, you should **train your dog to respond to the "drop it" command**. For most dogs, "drop it" is easy to learn when taught the right way, which is to present your pet with a trade — the object in his mouth for the treat in your hand.

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [Vetstreet, November 22, 2024](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Vetstreet, August 31, 2016](#)

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