

Senior Dogs and Hearing Loss

Just like humans, dogs may be prone to having vision and hearing problems as they age and move into their senior years. Sometimes owners fail to realize that the older dog is not able to hear their commands and assume that the dog is misbehaving or willful. Under these conditions the owners may punish the dog or even take him or her back through obedience training, both which can frighten and confuse the senior dog that is struggling to understand what is being asked.

There are some simple ways to check the hearing of your senior dog that will also provide you with some good information on changing your volume, tone or pitch when working with a senior dog. The first thing is to observe the dog in his or her natural setting. Are they responding to sounds, noises, birds and squirrels the way they used to or do they only respond when they are looking directly at an object or animal? If they seem to sleep through noises or not respond to a car coming up the drive when they used to bark and alert you, it may be that they are no longer able to hear. Keep in mind that dogs will rely on other senses such as vibrations on the ground, visual cues and even scents, so it may be hard to determine if hearing loss is actually occurring.

A very simple test is to have the dog inside in a quiet area. Turn off all sounds and wait until the dog is alert and awake but resting quietly. Very gently and softly move up behind the dog, about 5 to 6 feet from the hindquarters, taking care to not alert the dog that you are present. Clap your hands loudly together, watching the dogs ears and head for signs of hearing and response. If he or she does not respond, the hearing loss is significant. Move another foot forward and repeat until you have a clear picture of what sound level the dog can actually hear.

If he or she does respond, repeat the process using a lower volume of sound. Of course you have to allow the dog to settle back down and look away before you can do this. Don't use too many tests in a short period of time as the dog may become disinterested and fail to respond not because he or she doesn't hear. You can also try calling their name using different volumes, tones and pitches to your voice until you find the combination that ensures the best possible opportunity for the dog to hear. Keep in mind that hearing loss is not debilitating for your dog, he or she will just need some special accommodations. Once your dog has started to have hearing loss, they should always be kept on a lead or leash for safety reasons as they may not be able to hear vehicles, bicycles and other dangers approaching when outside of the yard.

About the Author

For more information recommended by Kelly Marshall, see these recent articles [Find Out If Your Dog Can Recover From a Stroke](#) and [Finding a trainer for your Dog or Puppy](#).

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