

# Man's best friend essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The dog, or man's best friend as we call them, is an animal that turns out we can comprehend much better than we think. Their behavior actually isn't too different from our own, since for both humans and dogs, emotion causes our certain behaviors. Although technically speaking, there is no exact way to tell if a dog tends to feel emotion or not, but with a bit of common sense and observation, the majority of people agree that animals do have feelings and scientists are even accepting the idea. Jennifer Arnold, a service dog trainer, has experienced watching a dog become depressed, angry, and even embarrassed.

As she states, " time has taught me that dogs, like humans, are emotional creatures. Just watch a dog whose beloved owner returns home from a trip – the dog jumps for joy. " (Arnold, Jennifer. *Through a Dog's Eyes*. 2010. ) Any dog who loves their owner would do that, which is enough proof to show that the dog is feeling an emotion: happiness. Studies even show that it seems to be that a dog will behave a certain way depending on their owner's emotion, as if they can somehow sense or understand what we feel. Charles Darwin, an English naturalist, also agreed with those who believed animals have emotions.

In his book, " *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*," he records every expressive movement he observed in animals. For almost every observation, it included the entire appearance of the face and the appearance of the dog's tail, which seemed to reflect what emotion the dog was feeling. For example, Darwin noticed that when dogs want attention they tend to rub against or lick their owners, they slightly wag their tail, and

also lower their ears to exclude any noise and concentrate on only their owner's affection.

As I mentioned in the last paragraph, emotion was one thing that changed animal behavior. Not only does the aging process affect the physical appearances of an individual, but it also affects people and dogs mentally. Like humans, dogs age too and the older they become they begin acting and feeling like their age. As a child, everyone is always so full of energy and as we get older we seem to get lazier and loss interest in everything around us; well the same goes for dogs. Some of us become handicapped, lose hair, and our senses just become weaker.

The aging process does not affect all dogs though, for there have been dogs at ten years of age who have not had any physical or mental incapacitation, while others suffer internal organ failure, failing senses, or orthopedic problems. It mainly depends on dog breeds, health, and simply just luck. It turns out that dogs are the most common victims of animal cruelty, with the percentage of 64. 5%. (“ Animal Cruelty” Most Common Victims. 2.

Humanesociety. org accessed October 15, 2012). Animal cruelty, both physical abuse and neglect, is a huge factor that changes dog's behavior.

It also reflects back on the topic of emotion, since neglecting dogs can cause extreme sadness or depression (which affects their behavior). Three to four million dogs and cats are euthanized, or killed, every year and five to seven million are usually put in animal shelters. (Sutherlin, Emily. “ Animal Cruelty: Facts, Prevention, Statistics, and Action. ” 1. Nowpublic. com accessed October 15, 2012). These numbers are due to the overpopulation of pets in

America. Only 10% of dogs in shelters are spayed/neutered, which causes female dogs to produce puppies and lead to more dogs in shelters.

Most of these dogs in shelters aren't adopted because caring for a dog is just too much responsibility. The average cost of basic necessities for dogs (food, medical supply, training, etc. ) is around six hundred to nine hundred dollars a year and because of these high prices, people are practically forced to return their dog to a shelter. (ASPCA, " Pet Statistics. " Last modified 2010. Accessed October 29, 2012. [aspca.org](http://aspca.org)). Having those dogs in shelters is abuse, because they have them locked up in cages, and with so many dogs to watch not all of them get the amount of attention that is necessary.

There are many other types of abuse that people might not even consider as neglect. Emaciation, obesity, dehydration, cuts, bruises, burns, lack of grooming, parasite infestations, abnormal urination, and defecation are all signs of neglect (Sutton, Emma Riley Sutton, eHow contributor, " Signs of Neglect in Dogs. " Accessed October 14, 2012. [www.eHow.com](http://www.eHow.com)). If you see dogs with these symptoms, they have most likely been abused by their owners. When dogs are abused it can affect them both physically and mentally.

Those symptoms include: submissive urinating, hand-shyness, cowering, mistrust, social withdrawal, depression, aggression, and even separation anxiety with a new owner (Bettmann, Theresa Bettmann, eHow contributor, " Mental Effects of Abuse on a Dog. " Accessed October 14, 2012. [www.eHow.com](http://www.eHow.com)). Communication, another way of changing behavior, is the way people express each other's thoughts, feelings, and information to one another and

comprehending it easily. As Debra Horwitz say, “ Communication is a behavior. ” (Kesling, Joyce. CDBC, “ Canine Communication. ” Last modified 2005.

Accessed October 29, 2012. Responsibledog. net). We humans all speak, although not all of us understand each other because different cultures speak different languages (Spanish, English, French, etc. ). Animals have their own system of communication, or it can be thought of as them having their own language. Communication allows us to understand what others are saying. Without knowing, there is a sense of panic and vulnerability because you have no idea what is going on around you and going back to the previous paragraphs, feeling a certain way causes a certain behavior.

Through research I found that there are three components to communication: 1) the person sending the message, 2) the person receiving the message, and 3) the communication signal (Kesling, Joyce. CDBC, “ Canine Communication. ” Last modified 2005. Accessed October 29, 2012. Responsibledog. net). So, when an owner and dog cannot communicate it is difficult to know why your dog is acting a certain way. For example, if a dog starts whimpering or yelping, it could be trying to tell us it is in pain or distress.

If a dog starts growling, it can be taken as threat, unless it is a playful growl. Dogs also use their body postures as a form of communication, also known as communicating visually. (Kesling, Joyce. CDBC, “ Canine Communication. ” Last modified 2005. Accessed October 29, 2012. Responsibledog. net). For example, when a dog has their ears flattened back and has their tail lowered

in between their legs, that shows they are frightened. Along with humans, our body language is also a way that allows us to communicate with other people.

If a student is sitting straight, has their eyes on the board, and is taking notes it sends a message to the teacher that the student is paying attention. There are also other types of communication between humans, which would be formal (where most people use a type of business or corporation speaking format) and informal (which is where people have more unrestrained conversations); and although it isn't completely discovered yet, there might be the possibility of different types of communication between dogs, since there are several different barks, howls, and growls made among the conversation of a group of dogs.

Although there are several differences between us and dogs, there also seems to be a great amount of similarities that can help us figure out more about domesticated animals. As you can see, emotions, aging, and communication are all prime examples. Scientists have a hard time telling why animals behave a certain way because we cannot just simply go up to a dog and ask them due to lack of communication.

But, little by little we get closer to this information through assumption, common sense, and observation because even though we are not a hundred percent sure, the explanation is pretty clear. The dog is not as much of a complex animal as we thought. In fact, it seems to me that the dog is the one animal that we understand the most, but the one animal we have so

much more to learn about. After all, a man's best friend should be someone we truly know about.