

These protocols contain general advice on those animal-related matters which, in Collier County Domestic Animal Service's experience, affect animal lovers and pet owners most often.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to take into account individual situations or consider unusual problems or circumstances. Accordingly, Collier County and its representatives are not liable for any claims or damages which may result from the access and use of these protocols and of the information contained therein.

**If you are concerned about the welfare of a particular animal, you should seek further advice and assistance from your veterinarian, or other appropriate expert.**

### **Shy Dog Desensitization Protocol (NOT an Aggression Protocol)**

**If your dog shows aggression towards people, nipping, growling, barking, or biting, do NOT use this protocol. Seek professional help.**

**Goal:** The goal is to help your dog become comfortable around visitors and strangers. This protocol is for any dog who tends to duck, cringe back, lower its ears and tuck its tail when visitors come to see him, especially strangers. We want your dog to learn that "everyone is its friend" so that it doesn't act so shy. You do NOT need to get through every step, every session. The goal is to make your dog comfortable with strangers, not to push too hard and make your dog anxious.

1. Find persons to spend time socializing your dog (people at Kroger's, the park, other places you go, or friends and neighbors at your house). If you are out, keep your dog on-leash. If you are home, it can be off-leash.
2. Give the visitor a bag of treats. The person should keep them in your dog's sight at all times, so your dog knows they are there. Your dog does not need to be near the person—5-6' is a good distance. If it wants to be closer, let it. But don't force it—we don't want it to be nervous.
3. Have the person sit in a chair, or on a park bench, and toss around 10 treats to your dog.
4. When it recognizes the person has treats, the person should give commands, like Sit and Down, any command that your dog knows.
  - a. If your dog obeys, the person should enthusiastically praise it and toss it treats.
  - b. If after 3 tries, your dog doesn't obey—YOU give the commands. PLEASE NOTE that this is not an obedience training session. Do NOT force your dog to obey—that will only make it nervous (which is the exact opposite of what we want). Instead, use treats to lure the dog into obeying.
    - i. When your dog obeys you, THE PERSON gives praise and treats. Your dog likes treats—it's important it knows treats come from visitors.
    - ii. Once your dog listens to commands from you (with the person rewarding), have the person give commands again, for treats.
  - c. Once your dog obeys the visitor, go to Step 5 (outside home) or Step 6 (inside home).
5. If on-leash, as your dog begins to listen to the person, it can move closer to them:
  - a. If it pulls on the leash towards the person, ask the person to say "(Your dog's name), Come."—let your dog approach.
  - b. If the dog doesn't obey, don't force it. Ask the person to do OTHER commands the dog can earn treats for.
  - c. If the dog finally pulls towards the person, do Step 5-a, above, and go to Step 7.
  - d. If the dog never pulls towards the person, just end the session on a happy note. Don't force it—the goal is for your dog to be happy around strangers, not pressured to be near them when it feels anxious. We'll make progress another day.

6. If you are in your home, your dog can go to the person at its own time. When it does, go to Step 7. If it doesn't, just end on a happy note. Don't force it—the goal is for it to be happy around strangers, not pressured to be near them when it feels anxious. We'll make progress another day.
7. After your dog approaches the person, they should hand-feed treats—treat on palm, hand below mouth height.
8. The person should not reach over your dog's head, but should keep his/her hand below your dog's head. Ask them not to pet the top of its head, but to pet its shoulder or under its chin, and continue to feed treats.
9. Don't reassure anxious behavior.
10. Keep initial sessions short, no more than 5-10 minutes. But use your judgment. If your dog reacts well, you can go longer and go through more steps.

These protocols contain general advice on those animal-related matters which, in Collier County Domestic Animal Service's experience, affect animal lovers and pet owners most often.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to take into account individual situations or consider unusual problems or circumstances. Accordingly, Collier County and its representatives are not liable for any claims or damages which may result from the access and use of these protocols and of the information contained therein.

**If you are concerned about the welfare of a particular animal, you should seek further advice and assistance from your veterinarian, or other appropriate expert.**