

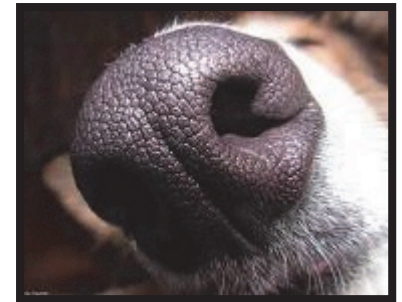


Why Does My Dog Sniff All The Time?

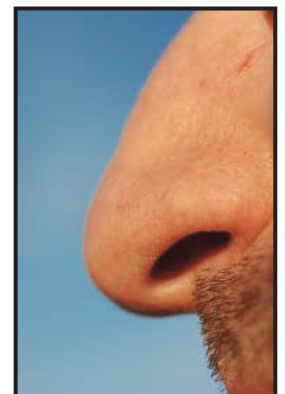
You may have noticed something amazing about your dog by now, even if you have only had it for a short while, but there is a large black, soft, moist and quite mobile organ on the end of its snout, called the nose.

A dog nose is more than a nose; it has an enormous function, more than we can ever understand with our human noses.

To explain a little how a dog nose differs to ours, here are some facts you may find interesting.

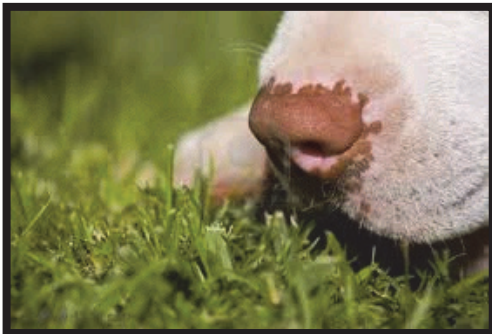


- Humans have around 6,000 000 sensory receptor sites in their nostrils and it is these receptor sites that distinguish one smell from another.
- An average dog on the other hand has an outstanding 200, 000,000 sensory receptor sites in its nose and that is an enormous difference. You can imagine what it is like for them smelling a barbecue or going for a walk on a frequented path.
- Now a Beagle or Bloodhound (breeds specifically bred for scent work) have over 300, 000, 000 sensory receptor sites in their noses so their power to sniff is even greater
- Dogs also have a lot more various cells committed to their sense of smell than humans which is why they can detect so much better than us. Where we smell one scent in a room, maybe two, dogs would be able to detect current scents, old scents, one off scents, scents of different objects, cooking, etc, all in one go including scents from a month, two months, 6 months ago
- To be even more specific, scientists used experiments where they diluted one medium in another to see what kind of concentration dogs could work with and the results showed that a dog would be capable of detecting a teaspoon of sugar in a filled Olympic swimming pool
- As quoted by Alexandra Horowitz, a cognitive scientist with a keen interest in dogs, she stated, 'humans could see petals of a rose drying and browning whereas a dog can actually smell the ageing process'





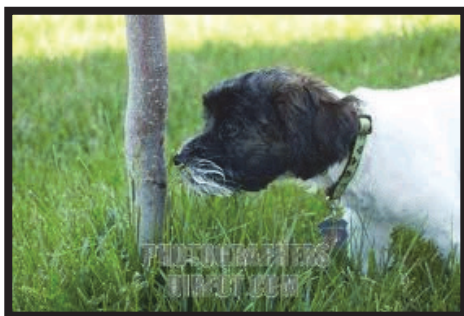
SO HOW DOES THIS



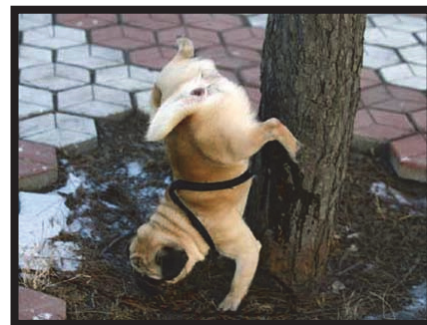
LEAD TO THIS?



AND THIS.....



TO THIS???????????



Well believe it or not, it is easy to explain. Whether you accept it is another matter.

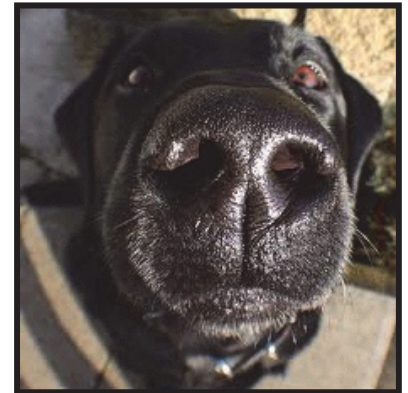
Dogs need their noses for many reasons; to detect other dogs, to detect food, fresh food, old food, rotting food, really delicious food, to detect potential mates, rivals, to recognize others, people, strangers, enemies, owners, visitors, friends, to detect places, beach, bush, vet, dog day care, grandmas house, next door, pet store, butcher, to detect weather changes, storms, rain, pressure changes, heat, wind direction, fires and most importantly, to know what is going on around their neighbourhood.

What is even more amazing is that they can do this all through their nose, without the need to even see or touch. They can get all this information from a distance, through barriers, through different mediums and during different periods.

Dogs need their noses to give them information on what is happening around them and it is one organ that does not really rest. If you watch your dog, and more closely, its nose, you may notice that it is always moving a little, twitching, nostrils ever so slightly expanding and reducing in size as it breathes in. This is because it is smelling you, what you are wearing, your mood, your plan, where you have been, who you have been with, what you are holding, what is happening down the road at the same time, who is walking down the street a block away, what the neighbours are cooking for dinner, what the toddler next door is having for lunch and what room it is eating it in and more.....



Your dog is constantly connecting to its outside world through its nose and it is any wonder we cause so many problems to our dogs when we continuously lock them up and prevent them from having regular access to it, when we don't let them come over and have a good sniff of us, when we suddenly yank them away from another dog's bottom while it was 'getting to know it' and when we drag our dog off in disgust when it is having an up-close-and-personal with some other dog's poop.

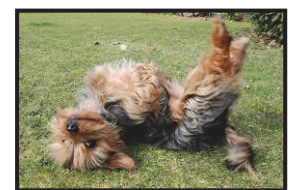


This believe it or not, is actually kind of cruel. What the dog sees is an enormous highlight of its moment being removed or even punished and what you may believe to be 'better' for the dog is potentially worse for your dog.

- What scientists do know is that sniffing fast tracks information to the brain
- What they also know is that when dogs have their heads down on the ground, they are in a much more relaxed and occupied state
- What we do need to be careful of is that by preventing sniffing, we don't start teaching the dog to use its eyes as a way to get information from its surroundings instead. This is because we do know that through its eyes, a dog is more likely to become overexcited, aroused, reactive and even super focused and unless that focus is on you, this can create its own problems
- Sniffing is far more calming to not only your dog but also to others around it as it reduces potential for conflict through their body language. If they are sniffing, they are in a lowered position, they are calmer, their eyes are not staring at other and their legs are all on the ground and this is the ideal state to be in when around other dogs

So getting back to those crazy dogs down here, why do dogs sniff..... and then go into a rolling frenzy?

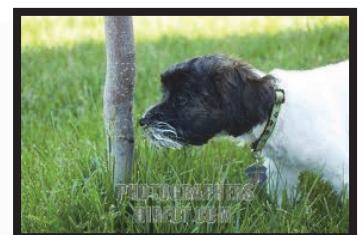
Dogs sniff and roll because it makes them feel good. Some dogs do it to mask the horrible perfumed smell rubbed all over them in a bath, others roll in rotting matter because it might make them better hunters and others roll because it makes them smell more earthy.



Either way, sniffing hones in on the spot and rolling is like the jackpot. All you need to do it take a look at your dog's facial expression whilst rolling and you can see it is in a state of bliss while doing it. So as much as it grosses you out when your dog is rolling on a tiny bit of bird poo, just leave it and let it enjoy its moment.

And what is so important about that tree stump or that particular blade of grass?

Once again, we see it as just a tree stump, a twig or a patch of grass just on the side of the road; they see it as a BULLETIN BOARD. Imagine if we lived in a world with no newspaper, no classifieds, no scoops, no stories, no information; we would be quite deprived and bored on what goes on around us. Imagine we only had gossip to go by, hearing bits and pieces from other people but never really seeing the hard facts?



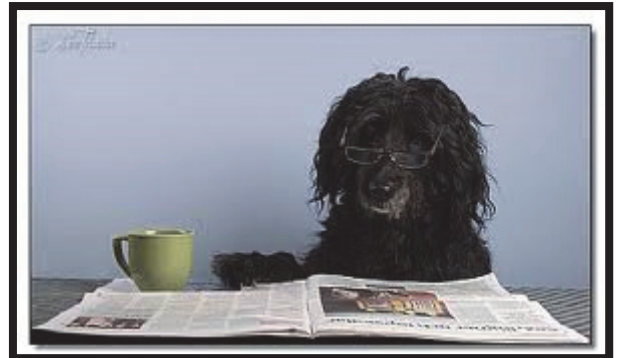
To a dog, sniffing a tree stump, a branch on the ground, a shrub, a car tyre, a patch of grass, a piece of paper on the ground, an old wrapper etc, all mean NEWS. They all hold scent and they all hold valuable information as to who,



when, where and what and even how often. To a dog, sniffing these things is like reading the daily paper and watching the daily news; it tells them everything.

So going back to what I mentioned before, imagine if we did not allow them this. Then they would need to hear it all from someone else (noise coming from the street), from you (sniffing your clothes) but there is something wrong here. It is not necessarily current news, it may be slightly distorted and it really does not relate to what the dog wants to know.

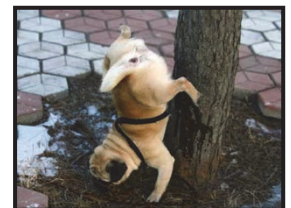
The only way to get the 5pm news is to get out there and find out for yourself and that is exactly what the dog wants and needs. Whether you are going for an early morning walk, an evening walk, a lunch walk or even a night walk, there is nothing better than letting your dog read the news scoop, just released, right in that moment to make its day.



Now again, think of how you get your message across when you want to comment on something you read. You add your comment, you state your opinion, you write an article to the editor and you voice your thoughts. Well a dog does not have the ability to speak through language but it can certainly do a lot, without being seen, through scent. What does it do?

It writes back by peeing or marking on the same object. If the story is worth commenting on, it will leave its mark, if the story is old or unimportant, it will have a good sniff and move on. If the story is new but not a matter of urgency, it may squat on the object and say 'Here Here' or 'Me Too' but if the story is new and really important, it may raise a leg and say 'WELL I THINK....'

The dog may need to let the female dog down the road know that he likes her, that he knows she has been around and walks down the same path she does. Another dog may need to let her know that he has not been desexed and that he is available. Another dog may need to let her know he is new in town and so on and so on. These are all important messages but with varying degree and the intensity of the sniffing, the height of the urine marking and the method of urine marking will give you an idea on what the message is.



Both male and female dogs mark so it is not limited to one sex however it is found to be more of a common behaviour in male dogs and even more common in entire male dogs.

SO DO WE LET DOGS SNIFF AT ANYTHING ALL THE TIME????

If you want to make your dog happy in every possible way, the answer would be yes but is it practical, no.

So the answer would be, yes but with moderation. You can certainly allow your dog to sniff a tree or grass every so many metres and if there is one really important story to read, then let it read it cover to cover. If there is a story that seems to be glanced upon, you can move on but at the end of the day, the distance you walk and the time you



are out with your dog is not necessarily that important. What is important is that your dog's senses were stimulated and that your dog found out the latest news on its own from the very source it came from.

Plan your routes well, do regular walks along the same path so the dog knows the local gossip but every once in a while, go somewhere new so it 'travels'. Let it explore new surroundings and take it all in. Let it smell the poop from a new visitor so it knows who it is before it even encounters it. Take the time to watch your dog smile as it inhales all the wonderful smells in the wet patch of grass and more than anything, let it be a dog!

One thing I would also encourage is that the dog 'politely' goes to read its paper. This means, no dragging over to the source. Encourage loose leash walking the entire time and teach the dog there is no rush getting there because now that you understand why your dog sniffs, you will take the time to allow it to do it and not remove it from there, you will not hurry your walk and speed around the block, you will pace yourself and stop to let it sniff, you will no longer yank your dog way from a tree stump and instead you will let it calmly walk across and stay there for a good moment.

Think about what YOUR dog wants and let it have it. It is a small sacrifice to make during a walk but an enormous gift to your dog, bigger than a new rubber ball or a new fluffy bed.

So the next time you see a tree stump, think again, there is news to be heard and you will never know what it is- but your dog will.

HAPPY SNIFFING!!!

