

POWER POOCHES
DOG TRAINING
— Happier Dogs —
Stronger Bonds
Brighter Futures



Canine Compulsive Disorder: Tail Chasing

Dogs chase their tails in circles because of normal play, boredom, or underlying medical and behavioural issues.

HARMLESS REASONS

Playfulness and Curiosity:
Puppies often do not realize their tail belongs to their body, treating it like a fun toy or a separate creature.

Excitement:
Older dogs may spin when they are happy, energetic, or playing.

Attention-Seeking:
If a dog learns that spinning makes you laugh or look at them, they will repeat it to get a reaction.

MEDICAL & BEHAVIOURAL CONCERNS

Boredom or Pent-Up Energy:
Dogs without enough physical exercise or mental stimulation use tail-chasing to burn extra energy.

Itchiness or Pain:
Fleas, skin allergies, tapeworms, or impacted anal glands can irritate the rear and and cause a dog to chase and bite their tail for relief.

Anxiety or Compulsive Disorder:
Chronic stress or Canine Compulsive Disorder (CCD) can turn tail-chasing into a repetitive, obsessive habit that is hard to interrupt.

WHY IT CAN BECOME A LOOP

When a mature dog experiences a sudden spike in arousal or excitement, the brain can get overloaded with adrenaline and energy. If they don't know what to do with that intense feeling, the brain defaults to a highly repetitive physical action—like tail chasing—to channel and release the surge of energy.
Because it physically dumps the adrenaline, the action itself feels rewarding, which is why a dog can loop right back into it after redirecting them.

THE BEHAVOURAL LOOP: CCD

- When a dog immediately goes back to spinning after a distraction, the neural pathway for that behaviour is strongly ingrained.
- **The "Trance" State:** Spinning acts as a self-soothing mechanism for stress, frustration, or pent-up energy. The dog may temporarily break focus to listen to you, but the internal anxiety or compulsive urge can pull them back in.
- **The Reward Trap:** A highly intelligent dog can accidentally create a sequence: Spin → Owner redirects with a command/treat → Spin again to restart the game. Even trying to stop it can accidentally feed the loop.

HOW TO HELP YOUR DOG

1 FIRST: GET A VET CHECK

Check that the dog is not suffering from:

- **Lower Back Pain or Deep Nerve Irritation:** Arthritis, a pinched nerve, or a minor spinal injury in the lower back or tail base can cause tingling or painful sensations.
- **Impacted Anal Glands:** Discomfort or pressure from blocked anal glands can create a deep, frustrating ache that makes a dog whirl around to face their rear end.
- **Neurological Onset:** Less common but possible in mature dogs, focal seizures or neurological changes can manifest as involuntary spinning or sudden bouts of tail-chasing.

2 INTERCEPT BEFORE THE SPIN

If a dog returns to the behaviour immediately, trying to stop the spin once it has already started is uphill work. Change how you manage the moments leading up to the excitement.

- **Predict and Intercept:** Think about what triggers his excitement (e.g. you picking up his lead, guests arriving, or preparing a meal). Interrupt before the first spin. The second you see his muscles stiffen or his energy rise, give him a calm, focus-heavy cue such as "sit", "touch" or "on your mat".

3 IF THE SPINNING STARTS

- **Change the Redirection Strategy:** Instead of redirecting with a quick command or treat, try a long-lasting, incompatible activity. Immediately transition them into a calming task—like a snuffle mat, puzzle toy, something to lick, a sniffing activity or mat training. This forces him to use his nose and brain, which naturally lowers his heart rate and adrenaline and resets the brain.
- **Track the Triggers:** Note when it happens (e.g. during household chaos, before meals, after a walk). Identifying whether it is fueled by excitement, frustration, or stress helps you interrupt it before spinning starts.