

WHY DID MY DOG SUDDENLY GET A MOHAWK?



Raised hackles (piloerection) = fur standing up along your dog's back.

It's an involuntary response to heightened physiological or emotional arousal—similar to human goosebumps.

WHAT CAN CAUSE RAISED HACKLES?

EXCITEMENT OR PLAY
High energy during games, chasing a ball or roughhousing.

FEAR OR ANXIETY
Feeling startled, threatened or unsure aboutt a new environment or person.

CURIOSITY OR ALERTNESS
Noticing a strange noise, new smell or unexpected visitor.

DEFENSIVENESS
Reacting to a perceived threat, sometimes with stiff muscles, growling or a hard stare.

Raised hackles signal arousal or stimulation—not automatically aggression.

WHERE DOES THE FUR STAND UP?





SHOULDERS / "HELMET"
May suggest alertness or excitement.

DOWN THE SPINE / "MOHAWK"
May suggest higher arousal, uncertainty or intense play.

BASE OF TAIL / "PANTS"
May suggest discomfort or insecurity.

READ THE WHOLE DOG



LOOSER BODY + WAGGING TAIL + PLAY BOW
→ likely excitement or play.



STIFF POSTURE, PINNED EARS, LOW OR RIGID TAIL, BARED TEETH OR HARD STARE
→ possible stress, fear or agression.

Body language + environment + context help you understand the trigger and decide whether to intervene.



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