Bad Behavior: A Health Problem?

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Is your dog changing? Does he seem to be challenging you? Is he reluctant to be patted or picked up? Is your dog becoming destructive? These behaviors, on the surface, may seem to indicate a behavior problem that a little extra training may help. But before you begin re-training, consider that your dog may be experiencing health problems. For instance:

- Growling and snapping could be caused by pain due to injury, arthritis, or another illness
- Turning over the garbage can or any change in eating or drinking habits may have to do with the onset of a hormonal disease such as diabetes
- Reluctance to being picked up may happen because of aches and pains associated with many diseases, including some cancers and arthritis
- If an older dog suddenly becomes destructive or incontinent, does not appear to be listening to you, or does not recognize you at times, this may have to do with the onset of dementia. This may also be caused by hearing or sight loss associated with aging
- Incontinence may also indicate kidney disease, a bladder infection, or arthritis
- Inappropriate barking may also indicate a vision or hearing problem. It may also indicate dementia in older dogs.

So, if your dog is not himself, consider a veterinary visit first to determine whether it may be a physical problem. With the wide variety of treatments available today ranging from using pheromones to nutraceutics and prescription medications, you may be able to help your canine companion be his old self again.

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