



July 18, 2017

Most dog owners at one time or another wish their dog could just talk. It'd take the guesswork and frustration out of trying to figure out what they want and what they're thinking.

Seasoned pet owner read their dog's body language like a book. A quick glance at their expression, how they're holding their ears, their overall posture and we get a pretty good idea of the situation. But don't forget the tail. It'll give you significant clues fast.

Those who live with Irish wolfhounds already respect the tail. An excited wolfhound can clear all the tables in the room wagging that long, muscular appendage. And it's just the right

height to double over a grown man who gets too close to the lash. It's a powerful instrument.

A wolfhounds tail is also a reliable barometer of their feelings. Dogs communicate with one another via body language and the tail — used by wolfhounds as a counterweight when bounding and coursing —speaks volumes.

Some tips for reading it:

— Watch the tail's height. If they're holding it high, they're in an excited or dominant state. They may be glad to see you or... they may be about to go for your sandwich.

A lowered tail means he's anxious or frightened. The more it's tucked, the more overwhelmed he's feeling. It can also be a sign that your dog is in pain or exhausted from too much play.

— Tension in the tail is a clue, too. If she's holding it rigidly high, she's agitated. She may be watching a squirrel flit across the grass or she's eyeing that dog down the street. If she's especially aroused, she may fluff the hair on the tail. Hang onto that leash.

If she's in that state and the tail is flicking back and forth, she's about to defend her ground or attack. Step cautiously.

— A wagging tail means a dog is happy, right? Not always. Sometimes when a dog is frightened by a situation, the tail hangs low and may flick back and forth quickly. In such a situation, be careful: the dog may feel trapped and is about to bite.

A happy dog usually wags its tail in a more relaxed way. If

they're especially glad to see you, it might beat back and forth enthusiastically.

— Watch which side the tail wags on, too. An interesting study in Italy recently found that a tail wagging harder to the right indicates the dog is attracted to a person or stimulus, while a tail wagging mostly to the left means the dog is fearful and wants to withdraw.

The tail is just a piece of the puzzle, but with wolfhounds its a big piece. Pay more attention to the finer details and you just could find yourself reading your dog more accurately more often.

Meanwhile, guys? Step back while you're watching.