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**HUMAN TRIGGERS OF  
DOG AGGRESSION**

by  
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For all those animals who have shared their lives with me, so that I might know the joy of the human-animal bond.

**ABSTRACT**

This study examined the effect of human approach on dog attitude. Of particular interest were those aspects of approach behaviour likely to trigger an attack. The approach profiles were developed from canid behavioural ecology and the recommendations of sources outside the scientific literature. The profiles chosen manipulated the eye contact, body position and movement of four experimenters. Dog emotionality (or likelihood of attack) was measured on two postural scales; low scores reflected a relaxed attitude, mid scores indicated fear and high scores suggested intimidation and readiness to attack. The approach profiles were tested within a radical behaviourist framework, using a small-N, alternating treatments design. A preferred treatment phase was also given along with baseline and reversal. Another treatment phase was run to assess the effect of individual experimenters on the dogs. Results showed, that profile had a marked effect on dog attitude, whilst individual experimenters did not. Dominant or threatening profiles scored significantly higher, on both scales, than neutral or submissive profiles. To minimise dog emotionality, and thus reduce the risk of attack when approaching an unfamiliar dog, this study suggests people avoid eye contact and reduce both their body profile and degree of movement. The limited nature of this studies findings are acknowledged

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